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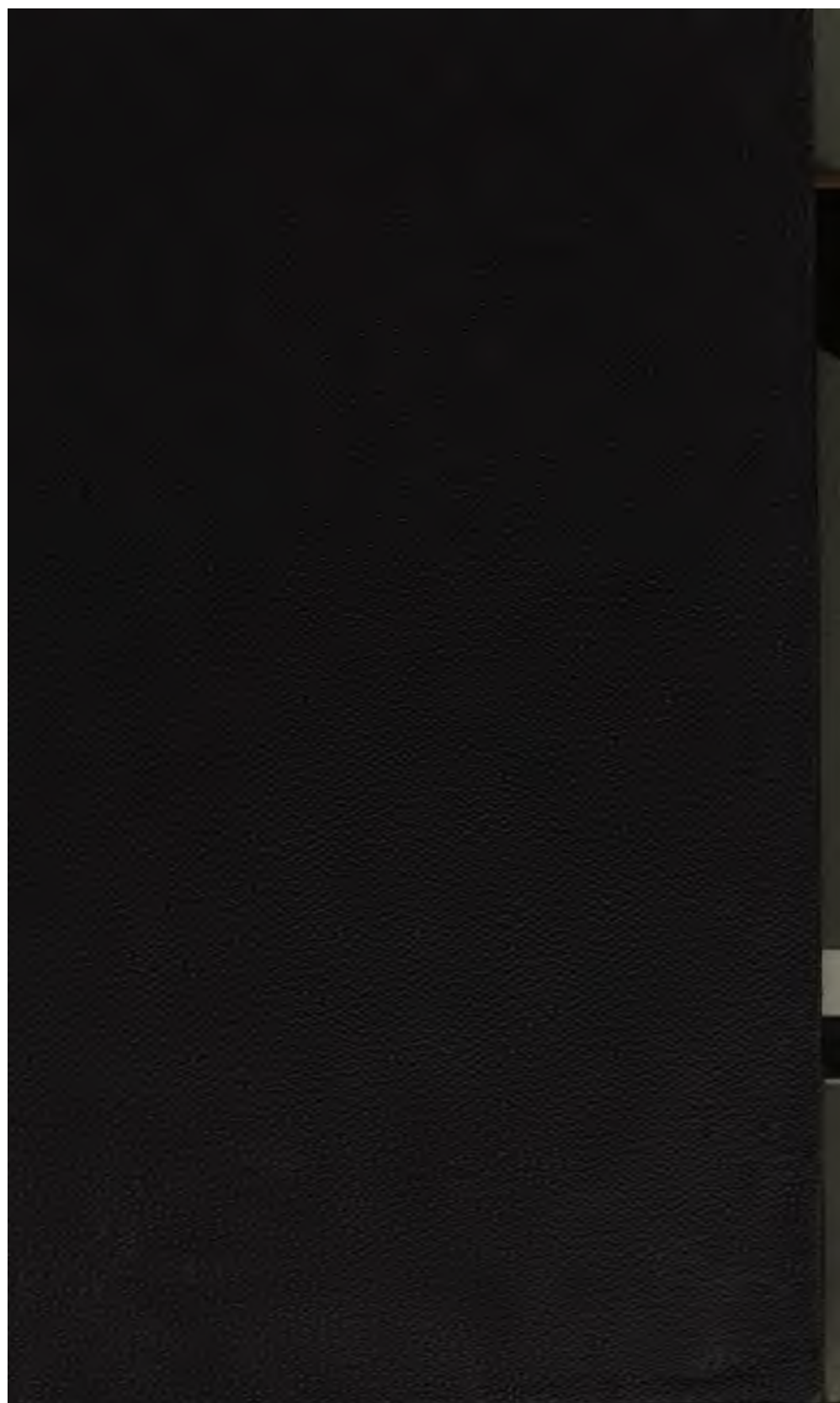
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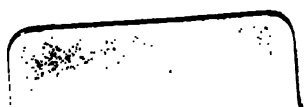
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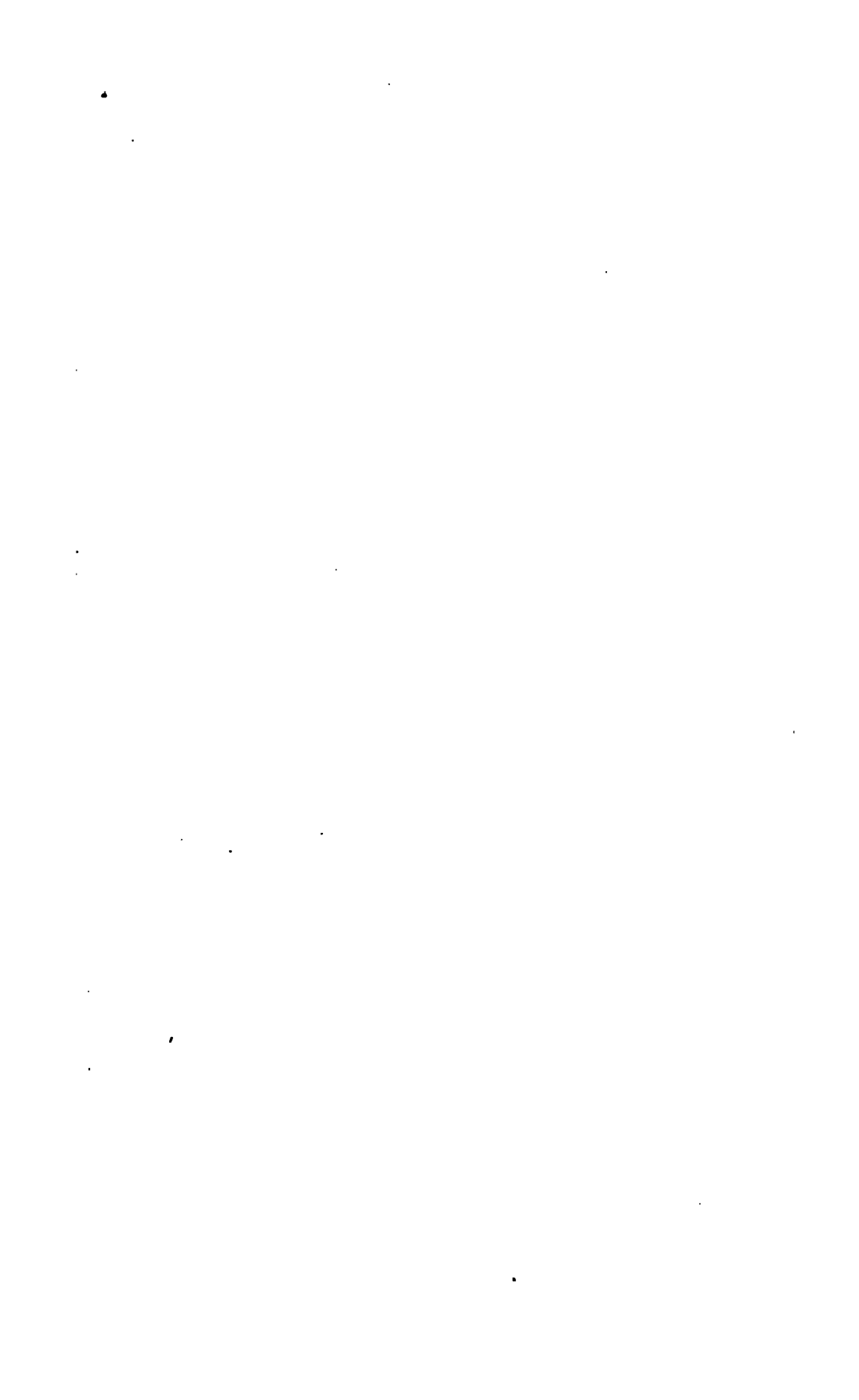
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1999



PRACTICAL SERMONS

BY

DIGNITARIES AND OTHER CLERGYMEN
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND IRELAND.



VOLUME THE SECOND.

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JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

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P R E F A C E.

ON the completion of a Second Volume of this series of Practical Sermons, it becomes my duty to express my gratitude for the countenance and encouragement I have received in the prosecution of my work, and to offer my public acknowledgements to the Prelates and Clergymen who have done me the honour to entrust me with their Sermons. The present Volume contains some valuable Discourses preached on special occasions; but the greater number are such as were delivered in the ordinary course of duty, and will be found to be of that plain, practical and affectionate character, which, I doubt not, will render this Volume acceptable to all who desire to be supplied with such Sermons, as they may read in private, or to their families, with edification and instruction.

My hope is, that whenever this series shall be completed, it may prove a permanently useful work; and, at the same time, a record of the zeal and earnestness with which those, who are known chiefly on account of the moderation of their views, and the respectability of

their characters, are labouring to inculcate the great and eternal truths and duties of our religion.

For several reasons, I have made no attempt to arrange the publication of these Sermons in any particular order. When the whole Series has appeared, I should wish, that besides other Discourses, it may furnish the reader, by the assistance of an Index, with one or more Sermons for every Sunday in the year on some portion of the Holy Scripture appointed to be read in the Services of the day.

Towards the conclusion of the present Volume, I have, by the kindness of the Rev. Dr. Mountain, (to whom I beg to take this opportunity of expressing my great obligations) been enabled to present my readers with a most valuable and impressive Sermon, preached more than forty years ago by his late father, the Right Reverend Jacob Mountain, then Lord Bishop of Quebec; a discourse, which, in addition to its intrinsic value, will, I doubt not, be read with much gratification by all who take an interest in the Church in the Colonies.

JOHN CLARKE CROSTHWAITE.

St. Mary-at-Hill, Dec. 1, 1845.

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

	Page	
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. <i>St. Matthew</i> iii. 2. By the Right Rev. THOMAS VOWLER SHORT, D.D., Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man	1	✓ ✓
THE FEAR OF GOD MAKES US THE OBJECTS OF HIS MERCY. <i>Psalms</i> ciii. 17. By the Rev. WILLIAM WINDSOR BERRY, M.A., Vicar of Stanwell, and Rural Dean in the Diocese of London	11	✓ ✓
FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES. <i>St. Matthew</i> xviii. 21, 22. Gospel for Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity. By the Rev. THOMAS SWORDE, M.A., Rector of St. Peter's, Thetford	23	✓ ✓
EVERY GOOD GIFT FROM ABOVE. <i>St. James</i> i. 16, 17. Epistle for the Fourth Sunday after Easter. By the Rev. J. GORLE, M.A., Rector of Whatcote	39	✓ ✓
THE JAILOR AT PHILIPPI. <i>Acts</i> xvi. 31. By the Rev. ROBERT CHARLES JENKINS, M.A., Incumbent of Christ Church, Turnham Green	49	✓ ✓
THE INSTRUMENTS OF SANCTIFICATION. <i>St. John</i> xvii. 17. By the Rev. J. HARTLAND WORGAN, M.A., Curate of Calthorpe	61	✓ ✓
THE UNPROFITABLENESS OF SINFUL PLEASURES. <i>Romans</i> vi. 21. Seventh Sunday after Trinity. By CHARLES RICHARD ELBRINGTON, D.D., Rector of Armagh, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Dublin	73	✓ ✓
*MEANS OF PEACE AND EDIFICATION. <i>Romans</i> xiv. 19. By the Rev. JOHN H. STEPHENSON, M.A., Rector of Corringham	85	✓ ✓
"A DEATH UNTO SIN AND A NEW BIRTH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS," AS ENFORCED BY ST. PAUL FROM THE SACRAMENT OF BAP- TISM. <i>Romans</i> vi. 1, 2, 3, 4. Sixth Sunday after Trinity. By the Rev. H. CURTIS CHERRY, M.A., Rector of Burghfield	101	✓ *

* Preached at the Visitation of the Venerable the Archdeacon of Essex,
April 16, 1844.

	Page
✓ ✓ THE END OF THE LAW. <i>Galatians</i> iii. 19, 20. Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. By the Rev. HENRY MACKENZIE, M.A., Perpetual Curate of Great Yarmouth	113
✓ ✓ PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY AND PRIMITIVE CHURCHMANSHIP. <i>Acts</i> ii. 41, 42. First Sunday after Easter. By the Rev. HENRY BAILEY, M.A., Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Curate of Hingham	123
✓ ✓ THE CHRISTIAN ALTAR REPAIRED. 1 <i>Kings</i> xviii. 30. Ninth Sunday after Trinity. By the Rev. JAMES BROGDEN, M.A., Curate of St. Michael's, St. Albans	138
✓ ✓ PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION. <i>St. James</i> i. 27. Fifth Sunday after Easter. By the Hon. and Very Rev. GEORGE PELLEW, D.D., Dean of Norwich	149
✓ ✓ THE JUDGMENT OF MAN AND THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. 1 <i>Samuel</i> ii. 25. An Assize Sermon. By the Rev. S. R. MAITLAND, Librarian to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury	161
✓ ✓ PREPARATION FOR THE LIFE TO COME. <i>Romans</i> xiii. 12. First Sunday in Advent. By the Rev. JAMES CHALLIS, M.A., Rector of Papworth St. Everard, and Plumian Professor of Astronomy in the University of Cambridge	177
✓ ✓ THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL. <i>St. Matthew</i> xvi. 25. By the Rev. R. CHENEVIX TRENCH, M.A., Rector of Itchin Stoke, and Hulsean Lecturer in the University of Cambridge	187
✓ ✓ IN WHAT SPIRIT WE MAY CONTEMPLATE OUR GROWTH IN GRACE. 1 <i>Corinthians</i> xv. 10. Eleventh Sunday after Trinity. By the Rev. ROBERT WICKHAM, M.A., Christ Church, Oxford	195
✓ ✓ THE CHURCH ON EARTH, THE APPOINTED WAY TO THE HEAVENLY CHURCH. Part I. <i>St. John</i> iii. 12. Trinity Sunday. By J. H. B. MOUNTAIN, D.D., Prebendary of Lincoln, Rector of Blunham, and Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol	207
✓ ✓ THE CHURCH ON EARTH, THE APPOINTED WAY TO THE HEAVENLY CHURCH. Part II. <i>St. Matthew</i> xv. 13. By the Same	221
✓ ✓ ON CONFIRMATION. <i>Deuteronomy</i> xxvi. 17, 18. By W. STEPHEN GILLY, D.D., Canon of Durham, and Vicar of Norham	235

CONTENTS.

vii

Page

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN. <i>St. Luke</i> xviii. 10. Eleventh Sunday after Trinity. By T. WILLIAMSON PEILE, D.D., Head Master of Repton School, and late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge	....	....	....	....	251	✓	✓
THE ORIGIN, INCREASE, AND EFFECTS OF FAITH. <i>Acts</i> xvi. 31. By the Rev. JOSEPH BARNES, Vicar of Berwick-upon-Tweed					265	✓	✓
THE TRUE HEARER OF CHRIST, ONE WHO OBEYS HIS WILL. <i>St. Matthew</i> xvii. 5. By the Rev. HENRY ALFORD, M.A., Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge; Master of the Grammar School, Bideford	....	....	....	....	275	✓	✓
HOPE. <i>Psalms</i> cxxx. 5. By the Rev. CHARLES J. SMITH, M.A., Curate of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge	....	....	....	....	291	✓	✓
NATHAN AND DAVID. 2 <i>Samuel</i> xii. 7. Sixth Sunday after Trinity. By the Right Rev. CHRISTOPHER BETHELL, D.D., Lord Bishop of Bangor	....	....	....	....	301		
PROGRESS IN RELIGION. <i>Hebrews</i> vi. part of 1st verse. By the Hon. and Rev. EDWARD PELLEW, M.A., Incumbent of St. James', Bury St. Edmunds	....	....	....	....	313		
THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS. <i>St. John</i> xi. 25, 26. By the Rev. J. O. DAKEYNE, M.A., Rector of South Hykeham, and Perpetual Curate of St. Benedict, Lincoln	....	....	....	....	327		
THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES. <i>St. John</i> xv. 2. By the Rev. GEORGE BELLETT, M.A., Incumbent of St. Leonard's, Bridgnorth	....	....	....	....	339		
REALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION. <i>Deuteronomy</i> xxxii. 47. By the Rev. RICHARD GEE, M.A., Vicar of Abbot's Langley, Herts	....	....	....	....	351		
BLIND BARTIMÆUS RESTORED TO SIGHT. <i>St. Luke</i> xviii. 40, 41. Quinquagesima Sunday. By the Rev. RICHARD MAYO, M.A., Perpetual Curate of Plaxtol	....	....	....	....	363		
THE HOLY COMMUNION. <i>St. Luke</i> xxii. 19. By the Right Rev. JACOB MOUNTAIN, D.D., formerly Lord Bishop of Quebec	....	....	....	....	373	✓	✓

	Page
✓✓ THE LAMB OF GOD. <i>St. John</i> i. 29. By the Rev. S. J. ALLEN, M.A., Vicar of Easingwold	397
✓✓ THE WORLD OVERCOME BY FAITH. 1 <i>St. John</i> v. 4. First Sun- day after Easter. By W. K. CLAY, B.D., Perpetual Curate of The Holy Trinity, Ely	409
✓✓ NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS. <i>St. Matthew</i> vi. 24. Fif- teenth Sunday after Trinity. By the Rev. E. J. LOCKWOOD, M.A., Curate of St. Mary's, Bedford	421
✓✓ THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD LEADING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE. By the Rev. C. H. HARTSHORNE, M.A., Curate of Cogenhoe, Northamptonshire	431

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THOMAS VOWLER SHORT, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN.

MATTHEW III. 2.

Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

THERE is hardly any expression in the New Testament which is of more frequent occurrence than that of "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God," and a clear understanding of the term may probably prevent that indistinctness on an important subject, which is so really injurious to the practical holiness of many persons. Ignorance has more to do with the irreligion which is prevalent around us than any one would imagine. The world do not know how ignorant they are on religious subjects. I may say on all subjects. It requires much knowledge to be able to comprehend the full extent of our own ignorance; but there is no ignorance so great as that which is based on the presumption, that we are perfectly well informed. To teach the ignorant we have only to impart knowledge. To teach the self-conceited, we have all to teach, and much more to *un*-teach. We should have overcome one half the difficulty if we could convince them that they were ignorant, and this is peculiarly the case in religious matters.

Every one fancies that he understands what Christianity is. My belief is, that very few persons do under-

stand what it is. I may say, that no one does, who has not received it. They who receive it, often fall away from it. They often transgress its laws. It often happens that they do not continue to walk under it; but I believe that they who have not received it into their own hearts, for a time, at least, hardly ever understand what it is. Every one fancies that he knows what Christianity is: but he has perhaps never taken the pains to ascertain whether his ideas on this subject are clear and definite, or only vague and general. Now it may, in part at least, free us from this indefinite and indistinct view of such points, if we try to ascertain precisely what we mean by the term the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of GOD. What is the idea conveyed to your own minds when you use the words "Thy kingdom come?" Is it a kingdom *here*, or a kingdom *hereafter*, for which we are praying? And in each case, what is it for which we are seeking? On either supposition, what is it for which we pray? When we say, "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven," what is it which we mean to assert? Is it a state here, or hereafter, of which we are speaking? When our Lord says, "Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," we have no doubt that a future state is spoken of. When on another occasion He said that there were some standing there "who should not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God come with power," we naturally think of something in this world. What then is this kingdom of GOD?

The kingdom of GOD is within you. It is a state of the heart and affections, wherein human beings are brought into conformity to the image of GOD. It is a state of the heart, produced by our receiving the great

doctrines of Christianity; those blessed truths which God has made known for the salvation of man; it is the being made partakers of that grace which brings us into communion with God. The kingdom of God is the state into which we enter; and many external events, which are connected in the mind of the great Ruler of the universe, with the admission of his servants into this state, are occasionally mentioned under this form of words. Thus, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," alludes probably to the coming of CHRIST. Christianity is now about to be offered to the world. Repent, for there is now proposed for your acceptance a means of reconciliation with God. So, again, the destruction of Jerusalem is the kingdom of God; because the just vengeance of the Most High was about to be showered down on those who had so wilfully rejected the grace which had been offered to them, and who had crucified the Lord of Life; but looking at the question generally, there are two senses in which we must understand these words: the kingdom of heaven is the Church of CHRIST, here or hereafter.

There are two Kingdoms,—the Kingdom of Grace, here, and the Kingdom of Glory, hereafter. In some passages of Scripture it is easy to distinguish to which of the two, allusion seems to be made. Occasionally it is very difficult to draw the distinction, but of this hereafter. We will now look to what is meant by the kingdom of heaven. If we regard the life of our blessed Saviour while He was on earth, we have before us the pattern of one who was free from all those passions which agitate the mass of mankind; but this pattern is so perfect, that we fail to realize its existence among those fellow creatures with whom we are personally connected; but among our friends and acquaintance, there are some

who appear to be governed by a temper at total variance with that of the world in general. While others are selfish, they seem to be seeking something beyond self, —while others are prone to revenge, they are always ready to forgive. It is not that they are free from the weakness and frailty of human beings, but the temper of their minds seems to be utterly unlike that of the persons who surround them. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, that if any one wished for the constant good service of his Grace, they must either do him a favour or an injury; that is, the natural gratitude of his own mind induced him to be grateful; and something from within led him so to forgive injuries, that he who was forgiven became entitled to his good deeds. It was the saying of a young and very eminent heathen, whose character is handed down to us by the pen of one of the most distinguished writers of antiquity, a man pre-eminent for his own moral feeling, a most excellent philosopher, and who obviously approves of the sentiment, as marking a very great mind. The saying of the heathen was this, “That he hoped he should live long enough to *more than repay* those who had treated him *kindly* or *unkindly*.” The two sentiments here expressed, are not the feelings of two men, on all points diametrically opposite to each other. They are not, one, the sentiment of a very good, and the other of a very depraved man, but they are the expression of the feelings of two men, both of whom, any reasonable man who was acquainted with their history would admire, and yet nothing can be more decidedly opposed to each other than these two sentiments—both would benefit their friends or benefactors—one would rejoice in benefiting his enemy—the other would destroy him. In the Sermon on the Mount, when our blessed Saviour gives the command, that we are to love our enemies, He adds

as his reason, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" The point therefore on which Archbishop Cranmer, and Cyrus the younger, differ, is exactly the point at which our Saviour wished to draw the line of separation between his disciples and the rest of the world. Let others follow the dictates of their own natural wishes: "But be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. No one can doubt which of these two tempers is the nearest to God. Perhaps the difference is really as strong where the two persons seem to agree, as where they differ. What is the idea conveyed by the term, *more than repay*, those who had showed him kindness? His object appears to be, to show a superiority over them. His object seems to be, not so much to promote their good, as to exhibit a proof of his own magnificence. The temper appears not to be that of gratitude, but of personal pride—of what a heathen would denominate *magnanimity*. He seeks for display more than reality, and even in his virtue, he seems as far from God as in his revenge. The state of mind from which such conduct as that of Archbishop Cranmer flowed, must have been raised far above the wish for display: he must have referred himself to some tribunal much higher than that of the opinions of the world. Now, Archbishop Cranmer was very far from exhibiting a perfect character: he was full of many and great weaknesses, but he did in this one point come very near the condition of our perfect Saviour. Of all the evil tempers which agitate the human heart, and create misery within us, there is none so powerful as that of revenge. The man who gives way

to a spirit of malice and revenge, has a hell within his own soul : he has something which prevents the possibility of his being happy : he has a temper within him which is at total variance with the spirit of CHRIST ; till he has got the better of this, it will be in vain for him to fancy that he belongs to the family of CHRIST—to the kingdom of heaven. The good Archbishop had, in this, mastered himself, and had therefore, as far as this was concerned, not only entered into the kingdom of God, but was governed by God's laws. He was a member of the kingdom of God on earth. But revenge is not the only temper which makes a man miserable. There are all the sins of the *flesh*,—there is gluttony, there is drunkenness, there is lust. There are men whose table is made a snare unto them, to whom the good things of this life, which God in his mercy has given us freely to enjoy, become the cause of their devoting themselves to this world. There is the unclean eye, which converts that best of God's gifts to man, into a never-ceasing source of temptation, and which degrades the owner of it down to the level of the brutes which perish. Then there are the sins of the world. There is ambition, there is pride, there is vanity. Ah, who shall say how sadly and how easily all these find an entrance into hearts, which have been, and which desire to be, devoted to the service of the Saviour ? All these are contrary to the spirit of our holy faith. The Spirit of God will not dwell in the breast which is given up to these. They render those miserable who are enslaved to them ; and he who is laden with all these, cannot enter into the narrow gate that leadeth to the kingdom of heaven : he cannot know that peace which passeth all understanding, that peace which made St. Paul sing psalms in the prison at Philippi, while his feet were fast in the stocks, and his back torn by scourges.

But there *is* a peace of GOD which passeth all understanding, which enables the good man cheerfully to enjoy what God has given him—actively to employ those talents which are committed to his charge, and happily to pass through this life till it shall please the Almighty to call him to a better. There is a peace which enables the repentant sinner to hope that his transgressions have been pardoned, and that the sinful tempers which still prevent him from drawing nigh to God, will be gradually weakened, and at last destroyed. There is a faith which tells the Christian that the Son of GOD hath died for our sakes. That He is even now interceding for us, and that He will send his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; and they who are, in any ways, partakers of this peace, know what is meant, when it is said, “The kingdom of GOD is within you.” It is a peace which this world can never give, and which, thanks be to GOD, this world can never take away. Some may never seek it,—some may seek it too late, and never find it. Some may barter it for this world; alas, alas! how foolish an exchange. “What shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” This it is which is the kingdom of heaven on earth. There are other senses in which the term may be used, but this is that which is most important for us to know.

Secondly. There is a kingdom of GOD hereafter, where the followers of CHRIST shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in those happy mansions which our Lord is gone to heaven to prepare for those who love Him. But perhaps we may some of us entertain ideas quite as indefinite with regard to our future bliss, as concerning our present happiness. I need not turn to descriptions of Elysium, which poets have pictured as the rest of heathen worthies; I need not turn

to the gross joys with which the Mahometan would reward his blood-stained and polluted votary. If we are to be happy for ever, our pleasures must be very far removed from these. This life is long enough, practically to show to many a man the transient nature of such joys; not merely that they pass away, but that they must pass away; that if they did not pass away, they must cloy. The pleasures of children are some of the most lively pleasures which are granted to human beings; but who would be contented with an eternity of childish play? How soon do even children seek for something better? How soon do these joys create misery if they be indulged in to excess? Look at any joys which this world can give, and compare them with Christian joys. Christian joys are rarely or never perfect, and why? We live in an imperfect state of existence; one concerning which the word of God has said, "This is not your rest." We live among imperfect beings, we are exposed to the wrong tempers of those with whom we are engaged. The prospects of usefulness in which we are apt to indulge are clouded by the perverseness of those whom we would gladly benefit. Suffice it to say, that we have to deal with the men of this world. Then we have a frail body, which wearies and gives way under exertions, which is liable to pain, to sickness, and to death: suffice it to say, that we are in this corruptible world; but if this were all we could easily bear with the ill conduct of others, and the pains and aches which man is heir to; but in these weak bodies we have weaker souls, corrupted, sinful souls, self-corrupted, sinful souls; we are daily exposed to numberless temptations from without; we are conscious of more temptations from within. When we watch and pray they are a grievous trial to us; when we do not

watch and pray, we give way to them, and they then become a heavier grief unto us. Happy is the day when we have not to deplore some rule of caution which we had imposed upon ourselves, but which we have neglected to observe. Happy is the day when we have not to confess that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed against our best and truest friend—against our Saviour and our Lord. And if this be your case in any degree, as it is mine, how can we be happy here? And yet, thanks be to God, there is great peace, great comfort here. We may cordially thank God for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but what shall be the blessedness of that state when we shall be freed from all this; free from all the troubles which our fellow creatures cause to us; free from all that the body causes to us? When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption; when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. What shall be the blessedness of that state when we can no more sin, no more wish to sin, no more break those pious resolutions which we here form; when God shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. Where we shall see even as we are seen. This is the kingdom of heaven hereafter, and happy are they who have the eye of faith firmly riveted on this heaven.

There is but one point more and I have done. It was previously stated that it is not always easy to decide to which of these states any particular passage refers; and the cause of this apparent uncertainty is this,—these two kingdoms are so closely connected with each other that there is nothing but a cloud which separates the one from the other, and that is the cloud which hangs over the valley of the shadow of death. They who keep

the eye steadily directed towards this object, can frequently see much of the brightness which is beyond; and that which is only darkness to the Egyptians, becomes a fire and light to the people of God. These two kingdoms are so inseparably connected, that there is no entrance into the kingdom of God hereafter, saving through the kingdom of God here. It is not enough to *call* ourselves God's servants; we must *be* God's servants: we must enter through the narrow gate, and walk in the straight way. Thanks be to ALMIGHTY GOD, who, in mercy hath called us to this state of salvation through JESUS CHRIST, who hath opened unto us a door of reconciliation, who hath given us outward admission into his kingdom of grace, and offers an entrance into the kingdom of glory; who says, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He will not cast us out now; but are there none of us who are casting ourselves out? Have we never read, "Woe, unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"—the kingdom of grace is at hand—is now the blessing of some among us, is offered to all. Who can say how soon we may individually be called upon to march forward and pass through the cloud, and to enter into a future state? And when that hour shall come, may we be found among the number of God's servants here, and enter into the joy of our Lord, through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

THE FEAR OF GOD MAKES US THE OBJECTS OF HIS MERCY.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM WINDSOR BERRY, M.A.,

VICAR OF STANWELL, AND RURAL DEAN IN THE DIOCESE OF LONDON.

PSALM CIII. 17.

*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
upon them that fear Him.*

THE Psalm from which these words are taken celebrates, in eloquent and glowing language, the mercy of God towards his offending creatures. It opens with a passionate burst of devotion, that bespeaks a heart warmly affected with the sentiment of gratitude, from the immediate contemplation of some great favour received from its heavenly Benefactor:—"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." The nature of the blessing that thus excited the Psalmist to call up all the faculties of his soul to afford, if possible, an adequate expression of his gratitude, is immediately afterwards declared,—“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.” The attribute of the ALMIGHTY, from which this inestimable benefit of the forgiveness of iniquities was derived was no other than his mercy,—“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear Him: as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” The most gigantic figures that nature affords

are used to describe the extent of the need, and the magnitude of the goodness that was willing to succour it; and well might this call forth a gratitude as unlimited; well might the whole being of him who was blessed be absorbed by one sentiment of thankfulness,—“All that is within me, bless his holy name;” when the utmost bounds of the visible creation,—“as high as the heaven is above the earth,” and “as far as the east is from the west,” were feeble types of the blessing and its Author.

There is, however, another and important point in this celebration of the mercy of God, besides its magnitude and its exercise towards man, that remains to be considered, and that is, the disposition of mind which makes the objects of it capable of receiving it: it is the fear of God animating his creatures, that makes them fit objects of his mercy; nor is this a condition doubtfully, or indifferently asserted. Almost every mention of the mercy of God in this Psalm is accompanied by an explicit declaration that it is exercised only where the fear of Him is found. “As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear Him.” “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him.” And that passage which I have taken for my text,—“The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.” Great as are the power and goodness of God,—humble and insignificant as are men,—yet is there nothing inconsistent in the arrangement which makes His blessings to us dependent on conditions on our part,—nothing inconsistent, but most consistent and most just. Were we like the rest of creation below us,—devoid of reason, judgment, and will,—then, like them, we could be called upon for nothing more than obedience to an instinct like

that which guides them; but whatever faculties, higher than that, have been given to us, must have been intended to be exercised,—must have reference to the end of our being; and if we have reason to judge, and will to choose,—if we have conscience to inform us when we judge and choose rightly or wrongly,—if we have a sense of moral obligation that makes us capable of becoming the objects of a law, and unanswerably assures us that we are responsible for the observation or violation of that law,—if we have affections which we can encourage when we know them to be rightly directed, and govern when we know them to be wrong,—then it is not more the nature of irrational animals to be subject only to their instinct, than it is ours to yield a rational and responsible obedience to the government of our Creator and Ruler, by means of those faculties, which are suited to the manifestations of his will towards us. Now, as I have shown in the several instances which this single Psalm affords, and as might be shown by reference to many other parts of Scripture, the quality which is required in man to correspond to the mercy of GOD, is the fear of Him. Not that wild incoherent terror that rises in the moment of certain, immediate, and inevitable danger; but that abiding sense of awe which must animate reflecting beings, when they do reflect on their entire dependence on a superior Power, whose wrath they have provoked, but whose love they nevertheless share, and whose power and love are earnestly directed to their welfare.

The fear of GOD, as it is always to be understood in Scripture, when spoken of there in approving terms, has for its two opposite extremes, a bold presumption on his goodness, and a desperate defiance of his power. The mercy of GOD is calculated to restrain the minds of

men from each of these; and the striking expression, "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared*," is more especially directed to the latter case, as the passages already quoted are applicable to the former.

Let us then inquire, in what consists this fit correspondence between the mercy of God and the fear of Him.

The fitness arises out of the transgressions of men. That our transgressions constitute our misery, is most true, and if these transgressions were involuntary, they might form sufficient grounds for the exercise of restoring and unconditional compassion: but it is because these transgressions are guilt in us; it is because we know and feel them to be so, therefore it is that we cannot become objects of the mercy of God, till we have learnt that fear of Him, which will lead to repentance. So true is it that to be convinced of sin is the key that opens to our understanding all the operations of the divine will for man's redemption, and opens our hearts to the admission of it. Therefore it is that so large a portion of Holy Writ, and the earliest operation of divine grace in the unrenewed heart, are directed to convince it of sin. The one appeals to our conscience, the other quickens it; it is by means of our conscience in both cases that the conviction is to be produced. We are bid to look deeply, honestly into ourselves, to question our own conscience in the light of revealed knowledge, and abide by the answer. We are warned not to be misled by the sophistry with which passion would justify its indulgence; nor by the immoral casuistry which perverts the distinction between right and wrong, moral

* Psalm cxxx. 4.

good and evil. Let us go into our own chamber; there pray to God to clear from our minds all misleading prejudices, and to enable us to judge impartially; and having done this, let us ask ourselves searching questions as to the true nature of many of our own actions, and of those of others, and the answer will assuredly be, that they are sinful, and must be hateful to God. If we do not do this, it is because we are afraid to do it: and why should we be afraid, but because even without that, in spite of ourselves, that restless, inextinguishable faculty of conscience, will, even as it is, make itself heard, will make us feel that the truth is with it, and falsehood with the loose doctrines of worldly men, and the loose language of an infected society. And which do we suppose will eventually serve us best, truth or falsehood?—can evil be allied with truth, can good come of falsehood? We may allow our minds to be occupied with the false principles, that float constantly in the atmosphere of irreligious society, but there is no salvation for us, till we have drawn out of the depths of conscience, that full conviction of the true character of many of our acts in the sight of God, which will lead to a salutary fear of Him—that fear to which his mercy corresponds. Truth is not merely the agreement of words with facts, but also the fit relation of one thing to another. To give praise to evil doing is a violation of truth of the highest order: and to this kind of truth belongs the relation between the mercy of God to be exercised towards man, and the fear of Him in man. Where therefore such fear of God does not exist, it is in fact not the mercy of God that men reckon on, although they persuade themselves that it is. There is perhaps no greater source of indifference about religion, and of an easy state of satisfaction in careless, or sinful living, than this delusion, that the

mercy of GOD is a safe resource. It even endeavours to ally itself with religion, by appealing to Scripture to prove the abundant mercy of GOD. The mercy of GOD is undoubted and most extensive; but what if it is not the mercy of GOD upon which they are relying, but a different quality, which they call by the name of mercy, in order to quiet themselves? This serious mistake will be apparent from a short consideration of the difference between these two qualities, and of the different parts which they perform in the work of redemption.

That there should be mercy it is necessary that there should be an injury sustained, and a demand for justice and punishment,—an acknowledgment of guilt in the offender, and a supplication for grace; and then the pardoning of the offence and the remission of the punishment is an act of mercy. But where his guilt, though proved, is denied on the part of the offender, or perfect indifference manifested as to the intention of the judge, either the merited sentence is passed and executed; or if it is not, which is still possible, it is no longer mercy that intervenes but pity. So then those who in the world have no fear of GOD before their eyes, and who live accordingly, if they reckon upon forgiveness hereafter, must be calculating, not on the mercy, but on the pity of GOD. And this is a very different thing, because it is nowhere said that in the future judgment, the pity of GOD will enter at all: his mercy will for those who have become fit for it, but not pity, for his pity is exercised in another way. The pity of GOD extends to this; it has led Him to provide a means of salvation for mankind, a scheme in which his mercy may have room to exercise itself; it leads Him to bear with the hardened and impenitent, giving them time to repent and be saved, giving them time to learn to fear Him, that so

He may have mercy on them. When the ALMIGHTY took compassion on a world lost in trespasses and sins, and ordained the means of reconciliation through his Son, and all the economy of grace conveyed to us in the Gospel, that was an act of pity. When He withholds immediate punishment from the guilty, sets before them the riches of his grace, points out to them the way of reconciliation with Himself, urges them to repentance by the suggestions of his Spirit, and the voice of conscience, that is an act of pity. And when the offender is touched by this compassion of his heavenly Father, when in contrition and gratitude he has recourse to these gracious offers of pardon and acceptance, then he becomes the object of his mercy, and most assuredly that mercy will shine conspicuous and triumphant in the day of judgment, nor cease till it has placed the pardoned penitent, a pure spirit among the perfected servants of the Most High.

Some of the terms employed in describing the day of Judgment seem designed chiefly to exclude pity. We are encouraged to look for mercy, but pity is not named in connection with judgment, while wrath and vengeance are. Wrath and vengeance cannot essentially be predicated of the ALMIGHTY, and if they are ascribed to Him, it is to remind us that the indulgence of pity is incompatible with the exercise of justice, though mercy may be reconciled with it. Mercy will have its object, but if wrath and vengeance are to have theirs, where will pity light?

Let us not, then, confound the pity, with the mercy of GOD; his mercy, if we seek it, will serve us in the day of judgment, but his pity will not, no, not though we may deceive ourselves by calling it by the name of mercy. His mercy is unbounded to those who obtain it,

but He has set bounds to his pity, that is to say, it has been exercised, and is being exercised, to put us in the way of his mercy. As long as we live here, as long as we are surrounded by the means of grace, we are the objects of his pity; this life passed, we can be saved only by his mercy, that mercy which is unbounded when it is exercised, but can be exercised only upon those who have become fit objects for such a quality as mercy is: "the mercy of GOD is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear Him."

The Gospel of CHRIST is in perfect accordance with that which is here asserted of the attributes of GOD, and proceeding upon the same principle, unfolds to men the method by which it operates for their salvation. It teaches in what way the mercy of GOD becomes a refuge and salvation to mankind, and shows how the effects of the fear of Him lead and fit them for the partaking of that salvation.

There can be no doubt that those, who are not confirmed unbelievers, without paying much regard to revealed religion, attach great value to those vague feelings of reverence towards GOD, which exist with some degree of force in most hearts; and upon those notions of his attributes with which He originally impressed the minds of all his rational creatures. But if these co-exist with habitual disregard of his laws, and indifference to his anger, they cannot constitute anything deserving the name of a religious disposition; for that is ever tending towards Him, as the source of all happiness, and at last finds happiness in admission into his presence. Such feelings and notions are doubtless the qualities which enable men to receive the advances which their compassionate Master has made towards reconciling them to Himself, and to these the instructions and exhortations

of revelation are addressed. Those who make themselves easy in sin, on the ground that God is merciful and benevolent, are not told that God is other than merciful and benevolent; it is on these very grounds that his Gospel commends itself to their hearts. Their Maker appeals to that assurance of theirs of his goodness, but it is in these terms: "Knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" He appeals to that assurance of theirs, that He loves them, but it is in such terms as these: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." That love of God then for his creatures, which they justly feel must animate Him, has not left them to vague notions of the way in which it is exercised: it has revealed itself to his heart and understanding in the Gospel: it has shown how his mercy is at work for their good. Lest they should run to destruction, by calculating upon his mercy where it cannot aid them, He has carefully taught them how and where it can. He has told them that it was necessary to send his Son into the world, because through Him alone they can be rescued from their sins—by faith in Him and his atonement, by love of Him and obedience to his words, exhibited as He is in the records of his life and sayings,—that is the quarter through which they may seek and find the mercy of God; and that they may seek it so as to find, they are instructed with what heart to seek, fear growing out of a consciousness of having offended, and being liable to punishment. To convince them of sin is one great object of the SPIRIT of God, speaking in his word, and acting upon their consciences; to this end the pure law of God is exhibited with all its fearful violations by men, and then they are bid to repent,—repentance

is the first fruit of fear, and to repentance is promised salvation through JESUS CHRIST.

In the Gospel then is maintained the doctrine of the text, that "the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear Him," and the cause of fear, and the terms of mercy, are set forth in a way which confirms the assurance of God's goodness, yet guards against the danger of a vague, irrational reliance upon it. To evade the terms of the Gospel, implies the absence of that very quality on which mercy can be exercised, and makes the mere goodness of God a vain resource. It is at the very best to fall back into those uncertain hopes and dark surmises about Providence, in compassion for which, and to relieve which, the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, and brought life and immortality to light. Do we value the goodness of God? what greater instance of it can there be, than sending his Son into the world to enlighten our minds, and lead us into the way of reconciliation with Himself? Do we look for the mercy of God, yet disregard the terms on which it is to be found? Are we taught that fear and repentance are the feelings which draw it towards us, and do we shut our eyes to the nature of those acts in ourselves, which give good cause to fear God, and which call for repentance? If we do this, we throw into confusion the order and harmony of the Gospel; we trust where we are told not to trust; we look for the pity of God where it cannot be exercised, at the day of judgment, and we disregard that pity now, when it is daily exercised in calling us to repentance, and pointing to the economy of mercy.

The Scriptures abound in sentences full of wisdom and truth, which retained in the mind, will guard it from the most fatal errors, will supply it with the most valuable instruction; the text is one of these. It is calcu-

lated to cheer the heart with the liveliest assurance of the surpassing greatness of GOD's mercy, and to warn it against the danger of mistaking the nature of that attribute: let us then add it to the stores of our memory, to those convictions that colour our opinions and conduct. Let it avail to keep up in us a true apprehension of that attribute of the Almighty, which is our chief support, and of the quality in ourselves, which it requires for its exercise. When we fly for succour to the thought, that GOD is a GOD of mercy, let it fail not to set us upon the inquiry, whether we fear Him; whether we shun all that He has marked with his displeasure; whether we pursue all that He has sanctioned with his favour. If his fear has so worked in our hearts, then the sentence which has been effectual to instruct, will be most effectual to console us, and we may dwell with undoubting confidence on the assurance of GOD's word, that "the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him."

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

GOSPEL FOR TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY

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MATTHEW XVIII. 21, 22.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

THE question of St. Peter relates to an important point in the regulation of human conduct; for amidst the conflicts of life, the inquiry will frequently suggest itself to the mind, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?"

The first impulse of the uncontrolled feelings of nature, is to punish every aggression upon our peace, or our property, and make the aggressor feel, that we can not only protect ourselves, but carry the war into his own quarters. It is obvious, that these feelings are necessary, to a certain extent, in a world where men pursue their own interests with very little regard to the rights or interests of others, and that the same provision of nature which endowed the lower animals with claws and tusks—with speed to pursue or cunning to elude their enemies,—the same provision of nature has implanted in the human mind a principle to enable it to repel unjust

and unprovoked aggression. The danger, however, lies in the abuse of this principle; in extending it beyond the limits which nature hath marked out; in allowing anger to subside into the mind; to mingle with our ordinary habits and feelings, and permanently to cloud and overcast the spirit. Hence the command in Scripture is, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath*;" that is, one revolution of the sun must mark out the duration of anger in the human breast; the luminary of heaven, when it next arises, and dispels the darkness from the sky, must behold all clouds dispersed from the mind, as the shadows of night retire before the light of the morning.

In considering, then, the question in the text, and the answer which JESUS gave to it, it will show us in what spirit we should treat the offences which we receive at the hands of our brethren.

The unlimited terms in which the forgiveness of injuries is commanded in Scripture, has appeared to many, at first sight, paradoxical. We are commanded not only not to return aggression, but to receive injuries with the most meek and forgiving spirit; with a patience and an endurance which, instead of disarming hostility, might seem rather calculated to provoke and encourage it. "If any man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain;" in short, the command is so unlimited, that the power of refusal seems hardly left to us, and that we must yield to every request that is made, and submit to every injury that is done unto us.

* Ephes. iv. 26.

In order, however, to understand the command, we must see in what circumstances it was first given, and then by what gradual misconceptions it was perverted from its original meaning. The injunction in the ancient Jewish law on this point stood thus,—“Life shall go for life; eye for eye; tooth for tooth; hand for hand; foot for foot* ;” or, as our Saviour expresses it in the Sermon on the Mount, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth†.” A rigid and exact retaliation of injuries was appointed. Whoever injured his neighbour, either in life or limb, was obliged to suffer, in his own person, to the full extent of the injury he had inflicted. But this was an injunction to the judges of the land, in apportioning the punishment to offences. It was part of the code of the civil law of the Jews. It was not the rule by which individuals were to act in adjusting their differences; but the rule by which persons in authority should determine, in their judicial procedure. For the law is introduced in this manner:—The parties shall be confronted together; “The men between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days, and the judges shall make diligent inquisition;” and when they have satisfied themselves by this inquisition, on which side the truth lies, they shall then proceed to pronounce sentence according to this scale,—“Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.” The rule was intended at once to hold out a sufficient punishment for crime, and at the same time to restrain the angry passions of individuals. But when, in process of time, this was perverted, so as to mean that every individual should be the judge in his own case,—that he had

* Deut. xix. 21.

† Matt. v. 38.

only to ascertain the injury, and then immediately proceed to inflict the punishment,—it is plain that this opened up an unbounded field for fierce and implacable contention. The whole of society would be thrown into disorder. He who received, and he who had committed an injury, would be alike dissatisfied: the one agitated by the fear of punishment; the other, by the thought of revenge.

It is to be remarked, too, that the injunction in the law related to severe bodily injuries, such as the loss of an eye, or the loss of a hand or a foot; but at length it came to be interpreted so as to apply to *all* injuries whatsoever, even to those of the slightest kind. It was considered as warranting a retaliation of every offence, and the principle was applied even to the most trivial aggression. Hence the cases mentioned by Jesus relate not to those severe and permanent causes of offence, the loss of limb, or of life, or the entire destruction of property; but to those smaller injuries which are apt to arise in the intercourse of life, and which should not be magnified into unpardonable offences. “If any man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;” which seems to have been a sort of proverbial expression among the Jews for bearing a light injury with patience. “And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain;” all which cases seem to relate to the ordinary intercourse of life, and to enjoin a meek and peaceable deportment under small injuries. They enjoin a man to submit in any case in which a sense of duty is not concerned. And the reason on which such submissions are recommended is this, that “the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water.” If the stream is suffered to find

a vent, it is impossible to say to what extent it may proceed. If every injury is allowed to ruffle the mind; if the memory dwells upon it, and feelings of recollected injustice fret the spirit, there is no saying to what height anger may rise,—how many fierce and implacable contentions may disturb the peace of human life. Whereas he who smoothes down the first rise of ill-will, and keeps his mind pure from the perturbations of passion, may do that at first, which, at an after-period, he will find it difficult to accomplish.

But is the injunction, then, it will be asked, to be understood *literally*, that men are not to resist evil,—that if our brother trespass against us seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again, saying, I repent, are we to forgive him? Can it be meant, that if men are sued at the law, and a man takes away their coat, they are to let him have their cloak also? Would not this be to throw down all the fences which guard the rights of property, and the peace of society, and expose everything to the grasp of lawless violence?

Now, it is plain, that to understand the precept in this sense, would be to pervert it. No society can exist, without a power in it to protect the innocent, and to punish the guilty; and even in the Jewish code, the regulations of law were most minutely and practically adapted to award to every crime its appropriate punishment. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed*,” was the law relating to the deepest offence; and to every particular transgression, a corresponding punishment was adjudged. And in the New Testament, the same doctrine is taught. The magistrate, it is said, “beareth not the sword in vain, for he

* Gen. ix. 6.

is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*." The person, therefore, who commits a trespass upon the peace, or the property of another, is, by the very fundamental laws of society, regarded as an offender, and an appropriate punishment is assigned to him, and if society is considered as one large family, the members of which owe reciprocal duties to each other, then, to refuse to correct an offender, is the same practical absurdity, as if the father of a family, in his own domestic circle, should refuse to correct an undutiful and wayward child. But the meaning of the command is, that in all the lighter evils of life, men are to bear them; that they are not to insist upon a strict and rigid retaliation of offences; that they are not to return evil for evil, injury for injury, or blow for blow, but that they are rather to reverse the process; meeting the frown which is directed against themselves with the smile of kindness, endeavouring to melt and soften the rugged and stubborn nature; to do good to those that hate them, and pray for those that despitefully use them and persecute them.

When the Apostle then said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" the answer of Jesus intimated, that forgiveness was to be carried to a much more unlimited extent than the question implied: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven;" or as it is expressed in St. Luke, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him†." The duty is stated strongly.

* Rom. xiii. 4.

† Luke xvii. 3.

It is not one offence only that you are to forgive: if the injury be repeated, you are to forgive it; if it is again repeated, still you are to forgive it. Nay, when the question of the Apostle implied that there might be a limit within which, he might show a just forbearance, and beyond which, he might exercise a righteous resentment, the answer of JESUS intimated, that this limit was placed at a much more remote distance than he contemplated: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." In short, there is to be no limit to our forgiveness, and as often as it is sued for, it must be granted.

But it may be said, is this to be done unconditionally? Is there to be no apology or explanation? When our brother trespasses against us, must he not, at least, make reparation for the wrong, or express his sorrow for committing it? Undoubtedly. The command is, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him." State to him, temperately, but firmly, the injury he has committed; awaken him to a sense of justice; and if he see his error, and repent of it, then we are to forgive him. If he should repeat his injury and again repent of it, and confess his error, we are again to forgive him. In short, how often soever he may offend, yet, if his repentance should succeed his fault, we are not to harbour any revenge in our bosoms. This is the doctrine of Scripture.

You are not to understand this, however, as if it destroyed the limits between right and wrong, or levelled down all differences between the characters of men, and taught you to look with equal and undistinguishing approbation on friend and foe. No. Anger is plainly a natural passion. It is implanted in the breast by the Creator as a security against violence, and we instinct-

ively prepare to meet a coming injury, as the body naturally shrinks from an impending blow. The abuse, then, consists in extending this feeling beyond the limits which nature hath marked out for it. When the anger outlives the injury; when the memory of former evils is called upon to cherish and keep alive our present resentments, then, we do wrong. It is the long-protracted hatred; the cherished desire of revenge; the wrathful and malignant purpose which outlives the offence, and refuses to be pacified, that is the object of condemnation.

The same distinction is to be drawn here, as in the case of the abuse of any other natural feeling. Thus, in the bereavements of life, it is natural for a mother "to mourn for an only son, and be in bitterness for a first-born;" but if the voice of her sorrow should assume the tone of despair; if there should be "lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not," this is not the allowed sensibility of nature, but an outrageous defiance of Providence. It is saying to the Judge of all the earth, that He has done wrong. It is forgetting the submission of the creature, which should lead us, in every event to say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." It is the same with respect to any other natural feeling implanted in the mind. When a person is in sorrow, he may innocently shed tears, as JESUS did at the tomb of Lazarus; but the sorrow which subsides into the breast, and spreads a continual gloom and melancholy there, is a sinful impeachment of Providence. The mind may give vent to its feelings upon a recent affliction, but the bitterness of grief should pass away with the event which called it forth. According to the beautiful illustration of Scrip-

ture, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" the burden of sorrow may weigh upon the heart, during the silent hours of the night, but when the light dawns, it must fall upon a cheerful eye and an unclouded brow.

It is by this rule, that we are to judge concerning anger or resentment. When an injury is threatened, we may repel it; we may avoid it; we may use every fair means to escape from it. Like the Apostles of CHRIST, who, when persecuted in one city, were told to flee to another, we may go beyond the reach of the danger which threatens, or with the instinctive feeling which leads a man to shelter himself from the inclemency of the elements, we may shelter ourselves from the storm of angry and contentious passion. We may join the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. But when the injury is done; when the blow has fallen, and the offence is past, the object of anger or resentment is at an end. If any compensation is offered, it must be accepted. The anger which rises upon the sight of a coming injury, must subside, when the injury is past. The memory must not brood upon it, and magnify its importance. When, therefore, we see our brother who had injured us, coming to meet us, and we turn sullenly away; when we refuse to accept the hand of reconciliation held out to us; when we will not listen to his expressions of regret, but when we even rejoice at his misfortunes, and cherish within us a deep and lasting resentment; this is the very frenzy of evil, and a feeling like this makes us resemble the character which the greatest of poets ascribes to the worst of beings, when he represents him, in the midst of the ruin into which he had fallen, as still unbent and unbroken in spirit; as cherishing an inextinguishable hatred against the Most High, and

solacing himself with the prospect of evil; retaining "the unconquerable will, and courage never to submit or yield, which if not victory, is yet revenge." This is the malignant spirit of the regions of darkness, and those who cherish this spirit, are the children of the wicked one now, and preparing themselves for his society hereafter. The lesson of Scripture therefore, must be imprinted on your minds, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him."

Still, however, it is a hard duty to the irritated mind to quiet its resentments. It is no easy task for a man smarting under the consciousness of injustice, to say to his troubled feelings, "Peace, be still." If it be a difficult matter for a man to change any opinion which he has long entertained; which has grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength; which has entered, as it were, into the very texture of his mind, and identified itself with all his feelings; then, how much more difficult is it to remove a rooted resentment; to change an opinion to which all his feelings of self-love are wedded; to overcome himself, and embrace the very object of his hatred? Nevertheless, this is a duty which his religion enjoins; a duty which the Founder of his religion exemplified, and which that religion affords aids and motives to enable him to perform.

There is often a rude and sweeping way of stating this subject, which, instead of winning for it the acceptance of the mind, arms all the feelings of nature against it. It is often stated in such a way, as if men should not, on any occasion, cherish an angry feeling, and neither have any hatred against vice, nor feel any re-

sentment against injustice. But this is evidently to misunderstand the matter. The feelings implanted in our nature by the Creator, are relative to our present state, and as Bishop Butler remarks, our inquiry is not, "Why we were not made of such a nature, and placed in such circumstances, as to have no need of so harsh and turbulent a passion as resentment; but taking our nature and condition as being what they are, Why, or for what end, such a passion was given us?"

Now, by the very constitution of our nature, we feel differently when we see a wrong committed, or a benefit conferred. In the one case, our indignation arises; in the other, a sentiment of approval is felt. And the holiest men may give vent to the natural feelings of the heart. He who never shed a tear at human suffering; who never felt a sorrow at the sight of human perverseness, or even a passing anger at the sight of human folly, may belong to some other nature than the human, but not to that nature which was borne by the SON OF GOD, and who manifested all the feelings of humanity, but "yet without sin*." But though resentment or anger may rise temporarily in the human breast, it must not become a permanent inmate there. It must never become the sole occupant of the mind, and turn it into a den of darkness; the abode of every unclean and hateful thing.

The parable which follows the text, shows in what sense it is to be understood.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants, and one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents; but forasmuch as he had not to pay, his

* Heb. iv. 15.

lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." The man pleaded so earnestly, that his lord's compassion was moved towards him, and he forgave him the debt; yet this same man had scarcely risen from his knees on which his supplication had been made, and scarcely dried the tears of solicitation which he had caused to flow, when he met one of his fellow servants which owed him an hundred pence, and he took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest." The man pleaded for indulgence, yet he was deaf to his entreaties, and, himself a monument of mercy, he proceeded to the utmost rigour of law, and cast the man into prison, till he should pay the debt. "So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. *So likewise,*" JESUS adds, "*shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*"

Our Heavenly Father forgives all men their trespasses upon the condition of faith and repentance, and He has so linked together the procedure of Heaven with the conduct of men upon earth, that we are informed, that "he that sheweth no mercy shall have judgment without mercy*;" and that "with the same measure that we mete withal it shall be measured to us again†." If

* James ii. 13.

† Luke vi. 38.

our repenting brother, then, comes to meet us, whatever be the injury that he hath done, we are bound to forgive him; and if we should refuse our forgiveness, we do it at the peril of closing up the Divine forgiveness against ourselves.

But even admitting that your brother, who has trespassed against you, does not repent of his crime; if he has seven times in a day repeated his injury, and seven times a day exulted in his power to do you harm; if he has treated your forbearance with scorn, and poured his contumely upon your meekness,—still, even in this case, you are not to hate him; not to cherish the purpose of revenge; but to pray for him, that his heart may be changed, and his iniquity forgiven. You are allowed to protect yourself against his violence, but not to rejoice over his misfortunes; not to put any stumbling-block in his way, nor to do him the smallest evil which may hinder his eternal salvation. He may yet evince a better spirit. The persecutor, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, was changed into the chiefest of the apostles of CHRIST. The most obdurate temper may, by Divine grace, be softened; and the man who now reckons himself your enemy, may yet be a vessel of mercy; he may yet obtain an inheritance among the saints in light; and perhaps, in looking back to his lot upon earth, may number among the means of his rescue, the patience with which you bore his assaults, and the lenity you shewed to his crimes.

It is true, we sometimes read in Scripture, that the punishment of the wicked is an object of gratulation to the saints. Thus, the righteous is represented as “rejoicing when he seeth the vengeance, and washing his feet in the blood of the wicked*.” And in the

* Ps. lviii. 10.

Revelation of St. John, the souls of those under the altar, that were slain for the Word of GOD, and for the testimony which they held, are represented as crying for vengeance,—“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth*?” But then, in their case, the trials and dangers of life are over; their probation is ended; their lot is fixed. They view the transactions of earth, not with the prejudiced eyes of mortals, but from the calm light of eternity; and considering them from that exalted state, they partake, as it were, in some degree, of the privilege of the Deity. But all other men, compassed about with infirmity, and liable to error and imperfection, are commanded to bear one another’s burdens; to be patient and forgiving to each other, even “as GOD, for CHRIST’s sake, hath forgiven them.”

You may have heard of a scene which sometimes occurs in private life,—of a parent on his death-bed, calling his children around him, and of the members of the same family, who had long been separated from each other by some bitter resentment, requiring each to express a mutual forgiveness, and enjoining them to shake hands in his presence, as a token of reconciliation, and before he could close his eyes in peace. No human heart could be insensible to such an appeal, in such a case; and accordingly, many a long-cherished resentment has, under these circumstances, given way to better feelings. Now, the command of GOD, the great Father of all, is every moment upon you; and He has declared by his Son JESUS CHRIST, that unless “you forgive every one of you his brother their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you.”

* Rev. vi. 10.

Let no resentments, therefore, be cherished in your breast, remembering that the forgiveness which you expect from Heaven, you must show, in your own case, to men. If your enemy, therefore, should be reduced to necessity, you must not triumph in his degradation. If he should want his daily food, even your hand must minister to his necessities; if he hunger, you must feed him; if he thirst, you must give him drink; for in so doing, you shall heap coals of fire upon his head; you shall thus best treat his misfortunes, and ensure your own salvation. In this view, the Apostle exhorts us,—“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the LORD*.” All the other attributes of God are held out to us as objects of imitation. Thus, we are commanded to be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful, and perfect as God is perfect; but this is the high and incommunicable prerogative of the Eternal. God, who dwells in light, inaccessible and full of glory, hath debarred the approach of any mortal hand from meddling with his thunder. He hath shrouded himself in the glories of omnipotence, and declared, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the LORD.” We may be the children of our Father which is in heaven, by imitating his benevolence; for “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;” but if we love them which love us, what thank have we? and if we do good to them which do good to us, what thank have we? for sinners do even the same; but the lesson of the Gospel is, “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

* Rom. xii. 19.

Let it be your object, then, amidst the conflicts of life, to cherish a meek and forgiving spirit ; and when injuries are done unto you, and you are desirous to know how to regard them, remember the question of Peter to Jesus, and our Blessed Saviour's reply, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ? And Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times ; but, Until seventy times seven."

EVERY GOOD GIFT FROM ABOVE.

EPISTLE FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE

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RECTOR OF WHATCOTE, WARWICKSHIRE.

JAMES I. 16, 17.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

IN the verses preceding the text the Apostle had been warning the persons whom he addressed not to be guilty of the wicked folly of supposing that God could ever be the author of sin*. He assured them that God, Himself utterly incapable of being tempted to evil, never tempts any man. In the sense of *trying* them, of giving them opportunities of refusing the evil and choosing the good, of showing whether they will keep his commandments or no, God may indeed be said to tempt men, as we read, for example, that He tempted Abraham. But this sort of trying was not the tempting meant by St. James. He meant that God never enticed man to sin: he assured his readers that, "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

* *Vide* MACKNIGHT.

The Apostle then goes on in the words of the text to warn his beloved brethren not to err,—not to be guilty of so gross an error as to think that God can ever endeavour to draw his creatures to sin and ruin: “Every *good* gift and every *perfect* gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” As if he had said, It is the invariable, the constant character of God, to be the giver of every thing that is *good* and *perfect*; it is impossible, therefore, that He can contradict Himself by leading men into evil: their sin and their ruin must be ascribed to themselves alone.

It is my intention in this discourse to dwell more particularly on the many mercies which we have received from God, and which may prove to us the truth of the Apostle’s declaration, that He is the unchangeable giver of every good and every perfect gift,—concluding with a brief appeal to those feelings of gratitude, which ought to fill the hearts of them who have received such overflowing manifestations of the divine bounty.

I would first observe that the Apostle in the text makes mention of God under the title of “the Father of Lights.” It may be that he had in view the folly of the heathen, who offered worship to the sun and moon and host of heaven, and that he wished to intimate that those luminaries were but instruments in the hand of God their creator, and that it was He who was the real giver of all the benefits which man through them enjoyed. It may be, as some have imagined, that he had in view the foolish superstition of those who supposed that the fortunes and actions of men were influenced by the courses and configurations of the heavenly bodies, and that he wished to point out God as the maker and guider of those shining orbs, which therefore were, as well as

things below, subject to Him, the sole disposer of events, whose providence watcheth and ruleth over all. It will however be sufficient for us to suppose, that the Apostle calls God "the Father of Lights," in order to invite our attention to His universal goodness by setting before us a striking instance of that goodness, an instance which meets our eyes continually, the gift of light, that great and early offspring of his power, the agent which spreads life and cheerfulness through the vast extent of unnumbered worlds. The sun, and moon, and stars, those lamps of heaven which give light to us on earth, are set in their stations by the great FATHER; He it was who made them; He it was who appointed them to convey light unto us: in this, as in all other cases wherein any part of creation ministers to any of our wants, God is the great source whence through his works good gifts are given unto men. That He is always and invariably the same unchangeable giver of all good things the Apostle intimates by saying of Him, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Now the heavenly bodies, the lights in the firmament, are affected, as regards our view of them, by many and divers changes. We see them rise and set—we see their light sometimes hidden by an eclipse—we see them sometimes describing a longer, sometimes a shorter course, according to the season of the year, and the part of the earth on which we are. I might speak also of the real changes which they in themselves may undergo, of the courses which they pursue in the immensity of space:—and I will add that however long they are kept in their courses and preserved in their beauty, they are still at all times liable to destruction:—the same mighty Being who spake the word and they were made, who commanded and they were created, can scatter them to

fragments or reduce them to nothing. He, however, the Father of Lights, is Himself unchangeable, from everlasting to everlasting He is God; whatever variations may appear, or changes may take place, among the works of his hands, through which He communicates his bounty, He is ever the same, "without variableness or shadow of turning:" upon Him we may always depend, and to Him we should always be grateful.

Have not we, brethren, as well as those whom the Apostle immediately addressed, ample cause to be convinced, that the LORD is gracious, and that his mercy endureth for ever—that He is the continual giver of every good and every perfect gift? He hath given us life, and He saveth our life from destruction, and crowneth us with mercy and lovingkindness: his might fashioned this wonderful frame of our bodies, even as it at first created the earthly materials of which they are composed. He hath spread out the lofty firmament above us, and by Him the greater and lesser lights of heaven give light upon earth. He hath filled the earth, our abode, with all things needful for our sustenance—He it is who causeth grass to grow upon the mountains and filleth the valleys with corn—He crowneth the year with his goodness, and his clouds drop down fatness. He hath given us the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the seas, for our use and our comfort, and hath given us dominion over these lower works of his hands. He hath given us a mind to perceive and to admire the wonders with which He hath surrounded and blessed us. Nor hath He left us each in lonely silence to brood continually on his own thoughts, and to seek in solitary selfishness merely his own support and welfare. He hath made us capable of domestic and social happiness; and to exercise the sweet affections which He

hath implanted in our hearts, he hath provided the endearing relationships of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of relations and friends: He hath provided by difference of abilities, and stations, and fortune, for the exercise of mutual assistance and kindness between man and man, and for the progress of the various arts and sciences which contribute to the security and the comforts of society.

Far, far more than all this, He hath given to man an immortal soul, bearing the image of its Maker, and exhibiting, after the measure of a creature, a resemblance of His own awful perfections, capable of knowing his will, and of obeying his commands, of receiving his approval, and of enjoying from Him an eternity of reward. And when man, created free to choose between good and evil, chose evil rather than good, fell from the favour of God, and received the just recompense of his transgression in the debasement of his nature,—a body liable to disease and death, a soul shorn of its original brightness, inclined to sin, and exposed to the Divine wrath,—even then the goodness of God forsook not the work of his hands. By the wonderful sacrifice of his only Son He provided, that the sinful children of fallen Adam might receive his mercy without prejudice to his justice. He provided, that by the gracious aid of his Holy Spirit the lost image of God might be restored in the soul of man, and the miserable heirs of sin and death trained up for incorruption and immortality. To us He hath revealed in his Holy Word all these his wonderful doings for us, and all that He expects us to do in return. He hath given that Word to be a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths. He hath taught us our duty; hath shown us what will be the awful consequences of neglecting it, and what will be the exceeding joy of them

who with a faith that worketh by love, lay hold upon the salvation which He offereth them in CHRIST JESUS. He hath taught us to call upon Him in the name of that mighty intercessor for all that we need for our bodies and for our souls. He hath given us holy days for assembling together to offer Him our united adorations; to hear his instructions; to meditate upon his word: and in the holy sacraments instituted by his Son, He hath provided a means of conveying his grace to our souls, and drawing us nearer to Himself. And by his ministers,—by his Scriptures,—by the outward management of his providence,—by the inward suggestions of his Holy Spirit,—He calleth us continually to turn from sin, and to follow after righteousness,—to “love the thing which He commandeth, and to desire that which He doth promise; that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely be fixed where true joys are to be found,” in his immediate presence, and eternal kingdom.

Let me now, in conclusion, repeat the words of the Apostle, “Do not err, my beloved brethren.” *We* are not, it is true, in danger of erring in such a manner as to deny that God is the Giver of all good things, or that He is the Giver of good things to us. We doubtless acknowledge, that He hath furnished and still furnishes us with all things needful to our temporal and eternal welfare. But, acknowledging all this, do we act as becomes them who profess to be under such infinite obligations? We have this day professed,—we are in the habit of professing,—to bless God for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. Have we also endeavoured, sincerely endeavoured, to obtain, through God’s grace, such a due sense of all his mercies as may

make us unfeignedly thankful? And have we accordingly shown forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by walking before Him in holiness and righteousness daily? Alas! may not GOD full often have reason to complain of us,—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me? Have we not too often forgotten the GOD in whom we live and move and have our being? Have we not too often abused his earthly bounties by intemperance and excess, or else set our hearts upon them, and thought more of them than of their great Giver? Have we not too often abused his spiritual mercies,—been cold and infrequent in prayer,—seldom occupied in reading, or hearing, or thinking of his word,—neglecting his public worship and his holy sacraments, or attending them with dull formality, or with roving imaginations? Have we valued as we ought the hope He hath given us of heaven, and striven to be found cleansed by the blood of CHRIST, and made meet through his Holy Spirit to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light? GOD be merciful to us sinners! But let us not be satisfied with acknowledging, how far short we have fallen in times past of showing forth, as we ought, our gratitude to GOD, our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Sanctifier: let each one of us resolve for the future, by GOD's grace, to use the mercies he hath received in common with his brethren, and also those that are special to himself, to the honour and glory of the Almighty Giver. Hath GOD given him health and strength, or hath He given him learning and wisdom? Let him the more earnestly labour in his station, to do the work for which he hath been sent into the world. Hath GOD given him worldly wealth? Let him use it in the spirit and practice of moderation, of humility, and charity. Hath GOD made

him one of a household—hath He given him relations, and friends, and neighbours? Let him endeavour to dwell with them in peace and affection, striving to minister to their comfort in this life, and to help them forward, so far as in him lies, in the way that leadeth to life everlasting. Hath God given him the knowledge of his word, the means of attending his worship? O let him use aright these inestimable blessings in the exercise of holy study, of devout prayer and praise! Hath God, no less good in what He withholds than in what He bestows, denied him earthly abundance, or tried him with affliction of mind, or of body, or of estate? Let him still thank God, who knoweth what is best for him, what circumstances are most fitted to wean him from sin and the love of the world, and to bring him to holiness and heaven. Thus, in short, let the Christian, not in any confidence in his own strength, but in reliance on God's grace, sincerely say, "I will not on my death-bed have to endure the dreary horror of looking back on a life spent in abusing God's infinite mercies vouchsafed to my body and my soul. No! Father of lights, unchangeable giver of all good, to Thee I offer myself and all that I have; take that is Thine! The body which Thou hast given me I will strive to keep in temperance, soberness, and chastity, a meet temple for the Holy Ghost, and a fitting instrument to accomplish the honest and pious purposes of my soul. The soul which Thou hast given me, that soul which is so precious in Thy sight, that soul which Thou, O blessed JESUS! hast redeemed from hell with Thy bitter agony and blood-shedding, that soul which Thou, O SPIRIT of grace, deignest to cleanse, to enlighten, and to strengthen,—that soul, O God, shall be Thine! The world shall not hold dominion over it—Satan shall not have it for his slave and his possession.

O make me for all things to love, and in all things to please Thee; and bring me, Thy most unworthy child, finally to receive, for the sake of my all-sufficient Saviour, Thy best and most perfect gift, even the inheritance of the Saints in light, the pleasures that are at Thy right hand for evermore! Then shall I know Thee better, shall love Thee more, shall praise Thee and serve Thee for ever and ever!"

THE JAILER AT PHILIPPI.

BY THE

REV. ROBERT CHARLES JENKINS, 'M.A.,

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ACTS XVI. 31.

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house.

SUCH was the comprehensive reply of the Apostle to the great question of the jailer at Philippi, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and as this question belongs to all mankind in every age, so all may find in its solution that comfort and peace in believing which it produced in the mind of the anxious inquirer to whom it was first offered. It is an inquiry to which, as regards our outward preservation and the care of the body, nature itself leads us, and that irresistibly. What pains, what anxiety, what diligence, are constantly employed in averting, in obviating, in counteracting the manifold dangers that await our temporal life, are known to all of us. If peril by land or by water, if injury, or pain, or disease approach us in any direction, and in the most concealed manner, how vigilant is our care, how sleepless our anxiety to escape them, or, if we cannot escape them, to resist their power and to arrest their progress! And not only when danger is visible and imminent are we thus alive to it; but even when it is indirect and latent, means of discovery and prevention are had recourse to no less than means of resistance and recovery.

Even the infidel and the ungodly turn in their perplexity to Him, whom they acknowledge not in the day of their health and strength, in whose hands they confess are the issues of life and death, and before whom they fall prostrate and trembling, like the Philippian jailer, exclaiming, "What must we do to be saved?" Blind and perverse in heart, they forget that danger was as near them even in the hour of their health and prosperity, as it is when their life is in the balance between death and salvation. They forget that their life is tried every hour in that balance, and the outward supports of that life, though so many, are all so necessary and all so weak, that the breaking of a single thread must be enough to separate the body and soul, till that day when the Almighty Power, which united them at first for purposes of eternal mercy, shall call them together again for judgment. Yet because their eye, weak and short-sighted as it is, discerns not danger near them, they live, as though they needed not the care of Providence—they acknowledge not, that the power and the mercy which created them is exhibited in every moment, during which He conducts this marvellous work in safety through seen and unseen dangers, as remarkably and as mightily as in that moment when He first called it into being. They fall into the sin of those whom St. Paul describes, who learned not from the things that are visible, the invisible things of God; and who, when they knew God thereby, glorified Him not as God.

Such was to all appearance the case of him whose question is answered for us in the text. Brought up in a heathen city, and placed in a situation in which he was little likely to hear of God, or even to resist the greatest temptation to sin against Him,—forgetting Him therefore as a Creator and preserver, and not careful to discern the operations of his providence, he is suddenly, and by

a miraculous event thrown into a state of terror and imminent danger. He perceives the power of God, or at least an irresistible and invisible power, working in and with the feeble and unresisting prisoners who were entrusted to him. In danger of present death, from the earthquake which shook the prison, and of future death and infamy from those whose servant he was, he calls upon the Apostle to tell him, what he must do to be saved. For I think it is not reasonable to suppose that in his present state of blindness and ignorance, he alluded only to his spiritual dangers, and the means of his release from them. It was the question of too sudden and overwhelming a fear to permit us to suppose, that it was suggested by that faith to which, nevertheless, it so securely led. The answer of the great Apostle opened to him the means, not only of temporal, but of spiritual rescue. It was the LORD JESUS CHRIST who had interposed to preserve him from his temporal danger, and to break the chains of his own captivity, and this in token that the salvation of his soul was proceeding with sure and steadfast progress, that his warfare was accomplished, and the yoke of his spiritual infirmity removed also. To that gracious Saviour he conducts his earnest inquirer, bidding him to believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and be saved with all his house.

Now I have directed your attention hitherto to the acknowledged salvation and preservation of the body, in its many dangers and trials by God's providence, in order that you may be led to compare herewith the dangers and trials of the soul and spirit of man, and its preservation by grace, and from the history of the jailer to see, how the one forms a certain and infallible path to the other—much and fatally as we neglect to follow it, and to commend your immortal souls to the grace of God,

while you commit to the guardianship of his Providence your frail and perishing bodies. We observed the manner in which the regular and ordinary course of our life tempts us to forget the vigilance of Providence, and the necessity of its sleepless care. We observed, how it is only in great and signal dangers, that our eye discerns the mighty and merciful work which is going on around us, or our heart is led to a thankful acknowledgment, and our lips to an open confession of our dependence on God. And our spiritual dangers are peculiarly illustrated by this analogy. For they, like the ordinary, and, if we may so speak, organic dangers of our bodily nature, are hidden from us—they are invisible to a common observer—they startle us not with the suddenness and terror of their approach—they are easily hidden among the crowd of worldly thoughts that fill our mind, and the most trifling incidents of daily life are able to conceal the presence of daily temptation. As in the fulfilment of our regular duties, and in following our appointed pursuits, we forget how “fearfully and wonderfully” that body which passes through them so successfully is supported in them, how delicately it is framed, how utterly inadequate its most vital parts appear for the share which they have in its labours, and how evidently therefore they need, and how evidently enjoy the support of an Almighty hand every hour and every moment—as we are apt to forget this in our daily course of labour and duty, so in our daily path of temptation, we forget, that the soul which is so mysteriously united to this wonderful workmanship of Divine power and wisdom, is itself as delicately and as mysteriously framed—that it is as weak, as insufficient in itself, as dependent, as easily injured, as that body is which forms its tabernacle; that its dangers, though still more invisible to the outward eye, are still more constant and perilous than those

through which the body passes, and that it needs the grace of God, to save it from languishing and finally perishing, no less than the outward frame requires the Providence of God to carry it through its many dangers. And as in the body, the organs of sense are the weakest, and stand most in need of those means with which Providence repairs their strength from day to day; so our spiritual vision, that eye which is given us to discern the temptations of our spiritual life, and the truths which are revealed to direct it, requires to be continually strengthened and kept awake, by that grace, which is vouchsafed us to sustain and quicken it. And not only does the inward vision require to be thus enlightened by the Spirit of God, but also that spiritual ear, whereby we are enabled to hear the Gospel of CHRIST to our salvation; of whose neglect and disuse the Prophet Isaiah speaks, in the words, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

And to this spiritual faculty, opened and assisted by grace, our LORD appealed in all his teaching, in the words, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Over these faculties of our spiritual nature, we ought to watch with care and anxiety, as we do over those of our temporal life; lest that inward blindness and deafness come upon us, which must prevent us from discerning our temptations, or employing those means of rescue and salvation from them, which the Divine mercy has vouchsafed to us. If we do not wilfully bring about this great calamity, whereby our souls are dead in the sight of God, and can receive no light from CHRIST, as the fulness of his glory, we have the consolation of knowing that He will awaken us to a sense of sin, and strengthen us to lay hold on the hope of *salvation*, set before us in the Gospel.

The state of sleep, in which our spirits are plunged, before GOD by his Divine Spirit converts them, is not a sign of danger, unless it advance to that lethargic torpor, which is the forerunner of spiritual death. Nay, it is even described as the state of all men, by nature; whence the exhortation is addressed to every one, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light." Of one therefore, in such a state, who sleeps but to be awakened, and is for a while inactive, but to spring up into a new and vigorous life, we may say as the disciples did of Lazarus, "If he sleep, he shall do well." Yes, he shall indeed do well, if CHRIST come to awaken him *out* of sleep. And however awakened, however aroused, however converted, his first inquiry will be that of the Philippian, "What must I do to be saved?" and that not only here, but hereafter; saved from the wrath of GOD here, and from his judgment hereafter.

Very frequently, as in the case of this early convert, the Providence of GOD is the first great agent in this Almighty work; it arrests the progress of our unbelief, by pointing to us some signal mark of Divine mercy or judgment; it teaches us to search out our spirits, and to discover how many of the early gifts of grace have been neglected and uncultivated; it urges us to recover what we have lost, to improve what we have, to seek by prayer what we have not as yet. It enables us to read the history of our past lives in a new light, and to a new and most solemn end. Like the word of prophecy, which seems dark and unintelligible, till the Spirit which inspires it is vouchsafed to us, the dealings of GOD with us will be mysterious and inexplicable, till we read our life with the illumination of the same Spirit, and discern how mercy and faithfulness has followed us all our days, and that everything has worked together for our

good, and ministered to the great work of bringing us to God through CHRIST.

But as we have now sufficiently for our present purpose examined the state of him who is awakened to a care for his spiritual condition, and is eager to prove by his diligence the sincerity with which he enters on the course which this discovery opens to him, we will proceed to examine the answer of the Apostle, which forms our text, and which is conceived in the simple sentence, "Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be saved." This reply, both to him who first heard it, and to us who now hear it, involves two great questions. The one is, "Who is He, that I may believe on Him?"—The other is, "How am I thus to believe in Him?" The former question admits of but one answer,—He is the LORD; that is, a Divine and Almighty Governor. The Apostles, as they were charged to call no man Rabbi, or Master, nor to receive for themselves such titles as these, could have no other object in calling Him their Lord, than to assure us of his Divine nature, and to lead us to confess Him, as Thomas did, as "our LORD and our God."

Such, then, is He to whom the Apostle directs the inquirer in the text. And as his first attribute reminds us of his power, the second assures us of his mercy. "He shall be called JESUS, for He shall save his people from their sins." How much, therefore, is conveyed to the heart of the Christian in the two simple words, the LORD JESUS. They are no less in power and significance, than "Almighty Saviour." But there is yet another title of our Lord, in which we are to believe in Him: He is also the CHRIST, the Anointed of God, both as our Prophet, as our Priest, and as our King; and in these supreme characters we are called upon to acknowledge and to worship Him. As a prophet, we are to receive with faith all that He discloses to us of God's mercies or judgments,

—his promises, his warnings, his menaces. As a priest, we are to look upon Him as our only offering and atonement, Himself at once the sacrificing priest and sacrificed victim, sanctifying Himself to offer it for our sakes, and sanctifying by his Spirit all who by active faith claim an interest in that great and final sacrifice, and apply to their souls its great and eternal benefits. As a king, moreover, we are to acknowledge Him as a lawgiver, a ruler, a Supreme Governor, by whose will we must be guided, if we would enjoy the privileges of his kingdom.

Such are the offices of CHRIST as the Scripture reveals them to us,—such are the characters which are involved in the very name of our Redeemer, and implicitly urged upon us by the Apostle in the words of the text, “Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

But He has yet another office which is necessary and supplemental to these, and into which GOD the FATHER solemnly inaugurated Him. He is the Judge of those hereafter whose Saviour he vouchsafes to be here. The FATHER had committed all judgment unto the SON; and inasmuch as the materials of this judgment are in this world, and its sentence only reserved for the world to come, our LORD might well say, that “for judgment He was come into the world.” Oh! that they who disregard the office of mercy which He holds as their Saviour, would remember how terrible and unanswerable will be the accusations of neglected mercy in the day of justice and judgment. The Scriptures have conveyed this truth with strange and touching force in the expression, “the wrath of the Lamb.”

The first question implied in the text is not, therefore, hard of solution. Nor is it one upon which any controversy can arise, to one who accepts the Scriptures as a Divine and infallible revelation.

—second, alone, which involves the manner and form

of our belief, and is conveyed in the words, "How am I thus to believe?" though in itself no less easy, has been much complicated and perplexed by those who obtrude their own private interpretations of Scripture on others, and make their own personal opinions and views essential parts of Christian doctrine. These are apt virtually, if not actually, to interpolate the words of the text, and to make a belief in CHRIST (not absolutely and in itself, but) in this or that particular and exclusive manner, to be necessary to salvation. Nay, by many, not only the reception of the doctrine itself, but the authority upon which it is received is carefully inquired into, as though truth could not form many channels for itself, and reach mankind from very different directions.

But the scheme of salvation is so vast and comprehensive, that the very necessity of grasping the whole must make us carefully avoid so dwelling on its minute and inferior parts as to lose the vastitude and sublimity of its entire scope. Its distinctive characteristic is, that its great outline and essential features are beautiful and sufficient, in every aspect and from whatever constitution of mind we view them. But the perversity and uncharitableness of man, continually interrupt our prospect of them, and lead us, by dwelling on minute doctrines, and often mere words (which from being without definition are to most minds without meaning or reality), to lose the grandeur and mistake the design of this temple not made with hands. Looking upon it from positions of individual and often constitutional prejudice, they cannot perceive how a difference regarding its subordinate features can possibly exist, or how (so long as the chief proportions of the spiritual edifice are maintained) another aspect may produce a change as regards its minuter details, equally harmonious with the rest of the design, and equally true with their own.

Let them but be satisfied to rest in their own convictions on points of less importance, and charitably tolerate those who see them in other aspects. Let them remember that such subordinate parts are only useful and profitable inasmuch as they support, and beautify and illustrate the great doctrines of Christianity, and set forth its supreme design. Let them (as one of old advised) be more skilful and considerate builders, more wise in spiritual architecture.

It were, indeed, enough to fill us with pain and humiliation, to witness this fatal error infecting every part of our Church, did we not trust that the SPIRIT of God, which suffers men to wander about the circumference of their religion through human infirmity, will in his good time bring them back to that centre which is unity and peace, and love unfeigned. Like the manna in the wilderness and the five loaves among the five thousand, let us anxiously trust and piously hold, that a sufficient portion of truth and grace will be gathered by all who follow CHRIST and sincerely search after Him in his Word, and in his means of grace. And can we think otherwise, when He has expressly promised, that they who seek shall find, and to those that knock it shall be opened? Let us remember how many and beautiful aspects the Gospel of CHRIST presented in the teaching of St. Paul. How the same two essential truths, which formed the summary of his instruction, "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST," adapted themselves to every mind, by being illustrated and combined in countless methods, so that the simplicity of the system, and its strange adaptiveness to those very minds which it subdued and formed, became to the new believer the guarantee and the token of its heavenly origin, and made it like that creation which it was designed to renew

—wonderful in its variety, and yet invariable in the great characteristics of its nature—separated, as it were, in its inferior parts, but united in its entire structure, and one in its effect and symmetry.

Surely, then, *they* frustrate the spirit of St. Paul, however they may dwell upon the letter of his Epistles, who draw from them a system of minute and inflexible dogmatic divinity, and urge it upon the rest of mankind as necessary to be received. As it is the great distinctive property of a Christian faith to work by love, we know that no such narrowing of the scheme of our salvation, no such unauthorized exactions from the faith of others, can be consistent with true Christianity. For it is not surely a work of love to plant with difficulties the path of faith, or to fill it with needless obstacles. That path is indeed narrow, but it is so from the strictness of obedience it requires, not from the straitness or hardness of those doctrines which it discloses.

If these doctrines are described as hard for man to learn, it is because he has to learn them as *motives*, and not as abstract truths. Simple they must needs be and plain, inasmuch as they are to become the motives of daily life, not only of the wise and prudent, but of the unlearned, the ignorant, the poor, and the infirm. Nor is the proof of their truth, which God has expressly ordained as alone recognised by Him, less easy for these to produce than it is for the learned, the rich, or the wise in this world. The controversy to which we are called is one of a plain and practical bearing. It is the provocation of one another to those works of active devotion and charity towards God and man which CHRIST professes that He will acknowledge hereafter in the words “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me.” Oh! how

vast is the consolation to the humblest and least instructed Christian to know that even he can take part in this great controversy, that "his labour is not in vain in the LORD," that if he but act up to the light which is given him here, the fulness of the glory of God shall be vouchsafed hereafter, and he shall see Him whom he loved, and served, and worshipped faithfully however imperfectly, sincerely however insufficiently; Him whom to know is to love, and whom to love is life eternal.

Oh! what are the frail and perishing joys of earth to that supreme joy of loving the Lord of Life and Glory here, and of beholding, in all that fulness of glory hereafter, Him "whom, having not seen we love, in whom though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with a joy unspeakable." The understanding shall rest in that light of knowledge; the will shall rest in the love of that goodness; the desire shall rest in fruition of that delight.

"The three disciples saw but a glimpse of that glory upon Mount Tabor, and were ravished with such contentment therewith that they cried out, It is good for us to be here." St. Paul being rapt up into the third heaven, heard that which was not possible to be spoken: yet thus much he spake, "I reckon that the afflictions of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Oh, may this glory be revealed in us and to us—in us in this life by the manifestation of the spirit of truth and the purification of a living faith, and to us in that hour when the form and fashion of this world shall pass away from our eye for ever, that we may open it upon a world of life, and glory, and blissful reality, in the presence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF SANCTIFICATION.

BY THE

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JOHN XVII. 17.

Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.

THE connexion of Divine truth with personal sanctification is here distinctly maintained. And this, my brethren, at once brings before our minds two important truths: first, that without the knowledge and hearty reception of divine truth, there can be no real and vital holiness, however there may be an appearance of morality: and secondly, that without holiness, at least as to its essentials, that is, the desiring, the striving, the praying for it, there is no true knowledge, at any rate no true apprehension of divine truth.

Divine truth and sanctification then are, as it were, cause and effect; consequently, where the cause exists not, or operates not, there the effect cannot be produced; and where the effect actually is not produced, there the cause either has not operated at all, or has been defeated by the counter-operation of opposite causes.

Again, divine truth being thus the instrument of sanctification, the Holy Spirit is the agent in the same spiritual work. Without the instrument, or intermediate cause, the heavenly agent in general works not; without the heavenly agent, or first cause, the intermediate cause, or instrument, loses its force and effect.

In the order of providence, however, and according to that universal law of things natural, by which all the causes in any given series, which are necessary for the production of any given effect, are in general to be found, none being wanting, and none being without its due operating force; according to this law, any exception to which on a grand scale we call a phænomenon, on a minor scale an extraordinary occurrence; by this law, in the order of providence, the constitution and process of things spiritual is in the main directed; and the first and intermediate causes in the series, however many, as they are all in their several proportions essential, so, where the final result is attained, are they all in general to be found in operation. The omission or inaction of any one cause does, as a rule, vitiate the entire series; though, as an exception, which, however, cannot be safely built upon, it may be that excess of action in some other cause may supply the deficiencies of the missing one.

Accordingly, the causes which conduce to personal sanctification, from the first to the final one, are all in their several proportions essential, and all, in general, indissolubly connected. First, the HOLY SPIRIT, as the agent or first cause, without whose operation we can do nothing: secondly, the word of GOD, or divine truth, without which, we do not say the HOLY SPIRIT could not, but does not, and, in general, will not work: thirdly, the study, not the mere reading, but the meditative devout study of that word: fourthly, the personal application of that word, as the rule of life, to our conduct: fifthly, earnest prayer in the following up of that study: sixthly, the resorting to every means of grace, and ecclesiastical ordinance, by whose instrumentality the divine word may be the more deeply impressed upon us, and the grace which accompanies and enforces it be the more abun-

dantly supplied. If we take the above, and any other such causes as by a subdivision of the subject might be produced, we may say of them all, in general terms, that they are each and every of them in their measure essential to the final result, as seen in personal sanctification.

We say, *in general*, because we do not presume to set limits to the power of divine grace, the first cause, or to define how far it may or may not operate without intermediate agencies or instruments. It can, doubtless, as an instance of almighty power, operate without them; and this in spiritual matters is a spiritual miracle, just as it were a phænomenon or natural miracle, if, without seed sown, or a sower to sow it, a crop of grain should spring up from uncultivated ground; but though divine grace can, as an instance of sovereign power, produce its results without intermediate causes, it does not, as illustrating and carrying out the settled laws of divine wisdom, usually proceed upon such principle. On the contrary, it seems carefully to eschew such exceptions as might serve to countenance an idea of casualty, or chance, or random and irregular action in a matter of such deep importance as Christian sanctification.

Let us suppose, by way of example, the absence or the inaction of any one cause in the series which is usually essential to the production of a crop of grain. Let there be no preparation of the soil, analogous to the entire defect of Christian education: or no seed sown, like total ignorance of Scripture: or no rain from heaven for the nurture of the seed, similar to the withholding of God's Holy Spirit: or no tendance upon the crop to clear it from weeds, and give it room to breathe, as it were, and expand, like the complete omission or neglect of Christian discipline. In the case of such omissions in

things natural, what is the result, but either the entire failure of the crop, or a crop that is not worth the gathering? And can we reasonably expect a spiritual harvest on easier or different terms; or think that God will approve what common sense and experience regard as worthless?

The Most High "does not bind Himself to means; but He has thought good to bind us to means." Such is the distinction asserted by the good Bishop Hall. The means, of whatever kind, whether scripture, or sacrament, or other subordinate links in the chain of causes, are, for the sake of man, devised for his use and his profit. Whilst then they fetter not the free agency of the Most High, but bend to the will of Him who first conceived them; they do strictly bind the Christian, as the subject for whose edification they were ordained, and whose proceedings they were to regulate and control. Meanwhile, as a present effect, and an earnest of the rewards of obedience, the faithful and persevering application to such means, though in themselves stringent as a law to the Christian, does, nevertheless, impart to him a freedom and a capacity which no self-devised and uncontrolled proceedings of his own could communicate.

In truth, subjection to divine ordinances, and this we may take in by the way as an encouragement, acquiescence in divine appointments, and a self-controlling compliance with means of grace, whether instituted expressly by God, or, in accordance with the analogy of the faith, and as subservient to higher means, by the Church, is either the truest freedom, or the surest way to attain it. There is no true freedom but that enjoyed by the truly sanctified Christian. All other liberty than that which is found in the hearty service of God, in the use of the means of grace, and the practice of holy living, is spu-

rious, and worse than that, is subjection to the devil. For as we cannot at once serve GOD and Mammon, so if we do not serve GOD, and make it our main principle to do His will, and, through the means which He has graciously vouchsafed, strive earnestly to save our souls alive, we do in truth serve His adversary the devil. We must be the servants either of GOD or of Mammon; and while the service of the latter is disgraceful and ruinous, alike without satisfaction and without reward, the service of GOD is "perfect freedom;" it is rational liberty, and the setting the spirit free for those nobler pursuits, and for the attainment of that heavenly reward to which, in the good purpose of GOD, the Christian is encouraged to aspire.

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." So prayed the Saviour in behalf of His Apostles just before He was about to finish the work for which He came into the world. He came to offer Himself a sacrifice for the sin of the world, and by overcoming the sharpness of death, to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. But heaven is the abode of pure and holy spirits; of spirits who do the will of GOD above, as we are taught to pray that we may do it here on earth. The title to that high and unspeakable happiness then was purchased solely by CHRIST's death. His precious blood was the price of our redemption. But the actual instating in that heavenly possession was reserved for those who, as our blessed Lord expresses it, had been "kept in His name," and sanctified by His truth. Sanctification, then, though not the cause, was to be the condition of salvation. And this sanctification was to be attained through divine truth. When CHRIST therefore prayed that His Apostles might be sanctified by the truth, and that the world likewise by their preaching,

for they were His ambassadors, might be brought into the same holy state, He did in effect pray for their final salvation. Sanctification was an intermediate stage or link between the first cause, or the grace of God, and the final result, that is, the salvation of the redeemed. And the chief instrument in this work was divine truth. "Sanctify them." Here is the divine agency, but through what instrumentality? "Through or in Thy truth." The agency then is God's, and the instrument of His devising and giving. The use, however, is man's, and the issue his advancement in holiness in this life, and the attainment of everlasting happiness, through the merits of CHRIST, in the life to come.

But what is that sanctification, wrought by divine agency through scripture instrumentality, which, as it is the practical result of the Gospel, constitutes what the Apostle calls "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord?" The text would answer this by saying, it is being in, acting in, and living in the truth. And this is very comprehensive; for it is to be conformed to the truth, and so to Him who is the source and fountain of truth. God's word is truth; and the sanctified Christian liveth "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!" The word of God is to be the Christian's law and rule. Doctrinally and practically he is to fashion himself by its truths and its precepts. It is the mirror in which alone he can behold the divine image to which he is to be restored. It is the instrument also for the recovery of that image. Other instruments indeed there are for the attainment of the same high purpose, as the sacraments and other subordinate means of grace, the worship of God public and private, and all such discipline, moral and spiritual, as the above instruments subserve to; but this, divine truth, is primary. It is the

main-spring in the machinery for man's spiritual edification, and as such sets all the other portions going. If therefore it be omitted from the system of moral discipline, or perverted in the use, its proper result, which is personal sanctification, can never be attained. Education without the Bible may make moral men, decent for this world, but will never make sanctified Christians, to be glorified as saints in the world to come. Education based on the Bible, but the Bible distorted, twisted to party views, used for the purposes of faction, and combined with a contempt for the other causes or instruments of sanctification, which the Church in her sacraments and varied means of grace supplies, may make disputatious Christians, knowing, as they think, in the letter, but ignorant of the spirit; whilst as an instrument for training in holiness, and rearing up for heaven, it is altogether, through man's abuse, despoiled of its efficacy.

"Sanctify them in Thy truth." The truth of God will instrumentally sanctify; but only so, first, when it is treated as the truth, being neither perverted nor partially received. For though the HOLY SPIRIT works with His own word, it is only when it is His own word, and not man's word by perverse commentary substituted in the place of it. And, secondly, when being reverentially regarded as the truth, it is at the same time applied as such, as an instrument of sanctification, and treasury of spiritual discipline, to every part of the Christian's walk and conversation. For this spiritual purpose, and in order to the full exercise of its influence as a moral engine, it is to be applied as disciplinary to the thoughts: sanctifying the reflective powers, presenting to them proper subjects of meditation, withdrawing them from vain and foolish and vicious discursions, and giving in general a simple, pure, and sober turn to the mind. When used *instrumentally* thus, and suffered thus far to

have its sanctifying effect, divine truth will meet with feebler obstacles in its further purpose of sanctifying the affections. What the reason has once been taught to admit, and not only to admit, but entirely and with all its power to receive as man's chiefest good, the affections will the more readily not only sympathize with, but yearn after, and long to attain.

The affections then must in a similar manner be disciplined by divine truth, and be brought into a state to desire simply that which reason, acting on the authority of the word of God, and thus become faith, shall have pronounced to be becoming and excellent. When reason and affection, thus trained by divine truth, have experienced that sanctifying effect which our Saviour in the prayer before us attributes to it, then the will, as the joint result of both, or, at the lowest, as influenced by their movements, will run in unison with the will of God, approving what He approves, desiring what He desires, and willing what He wills. This is a high state indeed of Christian discipline, nor is it often to be found without much alloy of human infirmity; but high as it is, it must be aimed at, as constituting that sanctification which divine truth blessed by divine grace was intended to effect.

Of course the discipline of the Christian, which conduces to sanctification, is not to rest with the reason, the affections, and the will, but must extend to the conduct, or as St. Paul words it, the walk and conversation. Religion, and that of the Gospel especially, is practical. As in the Bible there are things to be believed, and to receive these with all their sublime truths, however mysterious, on the authority of the word of God, is faith, so in that same word is contained the law and rule of life, to which the Christian must, without exception, *conform his walk and conversation*. If then he ap-

proves what GOD approves, loves what GOD loves, and wills what GOD wills, receiving the Bible as the word of truth, which is to produce these sanctifying effects, so will he pray, and zealously endeavour to complete all, by doing "in simplicity and godly sincerity" what GOD in that word commands.

Now this, carried out to its full extent, and applied to every servant of CHRIST, would realize that idea of the Christian state, both as regards the Church as a body, and every individual as a member, which our blessed Lord, without doubt, had in view when he gave utterance to the prayer in question; namely, that by divine truth, in connexion with those varied means of grace, which either Himself, or His spouse, the Church, by His authority, and in accordance with His will, should ordain, the Christian should be made one with his Saviour and his heavenly Father. "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Uus." One by participation of the common grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son: one by sanctification through the same divine word which the Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, have combined to reveal and impress: one by feeding spiritually on the same common food supplied in the means of grace: one by desiring, willing, and doing, what GOD, the Father of all, desires, wills, and approves: one thus with GOD and with His CHRIST; and one in like manner, with all those who, in the same spirit of love, and faith, and obedience, serve the same GOD and Father of all; the household of GOD, truly sanctified, and walking in love and unity, would realize that beautiful idea which our Saviour has here slightly sketched, and His Apostle elsewhere expanded, of "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."

The Scriptures thus, you see, my brethren, as the word of GOD, and treasury of divine truth, are the principal instrument of sanctification. But they are only such in effect, and in reference to the individual, when they are by the individual regarded and treated as such. The Spirit of GOD is the first and efficient cause, or agent; the word of GOD is the intermediate cause, or instrument. We must ever, then, resort to the instrument with due reference to, and in full reliance upon the agent. We must expect, and hope, and pray to be improved by its careful study, and as it is an instrument in the hand of God's Holy Spirit, not merely intellectually, but morally and spiritually; morally in the regulation and control of our bodily appetites and affections, spiritually in the kindling and elevating the aspirations of our souls.

It is plain, then, that the temper and spirit in which we use the word of truth, is a main point towards its having its sanctifying effect. To those who regard or treat the Bible as an ordinary book, it proves in effect an ordinary book. Read simply as common history, like any other ancient historical work; or merely for amusement, and the gathering up of facts, the reader will rise from its perusal with heart untouched and spirit unimproved. Resorted to, again, as a mere armoury of controversial weapons, wherein party spirit may forge its panoply of proof, and prejudice find support in sound, which it would in vain seek in the sense; in this case the fruit unto holiness will be similarly scant and rare. And it is because the Bible is too often read in this way, without any or sufficient reference to its character as an instrument of sanctification, that though this is a Bible-reading age, we in vain look for that chastened spirit, and that well-ripened fruit of holiness, which the fact in *general* would authorize us to expect.

The letter of Scripture, indeed, is, like the letter of other books, to be ascertained critically, and received intellectually, and thus the scholar may scholarwise receive it, while to its sanctifying influences he is dead; it has, however, a spiritual meaning, mysteries couched beneath the letter, which other books have not, and which none but the spiritually-minded penetrate, "because they are spiritually discerned." And, doubtless, one and a main reason why the reading of Scripture is in too many instances inoperative as an instrument of sanctification, is that other instruments of sanctification, necessary as links in the series, and conducive to the formation of the spiritual mind, are neglected; the Sacraments, for example, and other means of grace which the Church in her ordinances supplies. Reading, without devotion and discipline, will furnish our heads intellectually, but leave our hearts untouched. To use the form of devotion in ignorance or neglect of Scripture, will end in a mere form, and starve the spirit. All the means of sanctification must go together, because, as a general rule, they only produce their effect by working together. And it is the separation of them on sectarian and factious grounds, or from indifference and carelessness, that presents to us the sad spectacle, on the one side, of Bible-readers, and who somewhat proudly call themselves Bible-Christians, that are unsanctified in heart, despisers of authority, and negligent of the means of grace; and of punctual church-goers, on the other side, that are at once ignorant of the Bible, and insensible of its requirements.

To profit by the Bible, then, as the instrument of our sanctification, we must study it with persevering devout prayer; because by prayer we draw down the succour of that blessed Spirit who alone can make the instrument effectual. *With its study we must also combine a*

devout application to the means of grace; because by them too, as auxiliary to the primary instrument, the Spirit of grace operates upon our hearts. And this, we cannot doubt, is the reason why we so frequently find homely but honest-hearted persons of very slight attainments, nay, otherwise ignorant, who go to the Scriptures in a right spirit, as an instrument of sanctification, joining therewith a reverent use of all other means of grace, penetrate into its sublime truths so much more deeply, and so much more to their spiritual edification and comfort than others, who, with every help of learning, study it indeed more extensively, but rather as a work of intellect and field for criticism, than as the school of Christian discipline. In this sense we may not unaptly apply to spiritual lore what the wise man observed upon a different subject, that "a little which the righteous hath is better than great riches of the ungodly."

We may conclude, then, that the only sanctified students of the Bible are the spiritual students; such as resort to the word of GOD as a system of spiritual discipline, and as the instrument by which God's Holy Spirit is to work upon their hearts. Applying it thus as disciplinary to their thoughts for their direction, to their affections for their subjection and control, to their wills for their right formation, and generally as a law and rule to their walk and conversation, such persons are enabled to go on from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, till, daily growing in knowledge and in all goodness, they come at length, in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, to "the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST."

THE
UNPROFITABLENESS OF SINFUL PLEASURES.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY

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ROMANS VI. 21.

*What fruit had ye, then, in those things whereof ye are now
ashamed?*

BY this strong and animated appeal the great Apostle of the Gentiles enforces upon his Roman converts the unprofitableness, the absolute nothingness of those vicious pleasures, those criminal indulgences, in which they had rioted while sanctioned by the flattering and corrupt principles of Pagan mythology. We shudder as we read the black catalogue of the crimes which disgraced their unconverted state. The whole power of language is made use of by the Apostle to describe their desperate condition; "full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." Such were the men to whom the Gospel had been preached—such were the men who had turned from the paths of darkness to the light of Revelation. The Apostle gladly seizes the opportunity of reminding them what their situation had been, and of contrasting with it their present ameliorated condition. He describes their former bondage to sin, the surrender of their members to

iniquity, and to prevent the return of such disgraceful servitude, to prevent them from ever entertaining a wish to renew their former course of life, he calls upon them to state the advantages which they had derived from such a course, he appeals to their own reason as the guide of their future conduct: "Ye enjoyed the triumphs of sin for a season, ye were alienated from God, ye gave yourselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness; what fruit had ye in those things?" Was that conduct for which you must now feel the deepest shame, was it attended with any advantage? Doth it seem evil to you this day to serve the LORD? The conscience of each disciple could make but the same answer, they must all exclaim with the children of Israel in the days of old, "The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

But while each of us is ready to admit the abominations of gentile superstition, the shameful degradation of human nature among the heathen of old, while each of us perceives how appropriate the vehemence of the Apostle's exhortations, and readily admits that his word, like that of his Heavenly Master, was with power, we cannot, we will not see, that to us, not less than to the Romans of old, are these admonitions addressed—we will not reflect, that to the Christian of the present day, to each of us, my brethren, does the warning voice of the inspired martyr still repeat, "What fruit had ye, then, in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" That world, whose service was incompatible with Christianity in the days of old, is still the same—its friendship is still enmity with God—our Church has pronounced that it is still a wicked world, and the experience of all must confirm the declaration of the Apostle, "We know that the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Is there any here so dull, so inattentive as not to be able to trace in the pursuits of his fellow-men the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, those distinguishing characteristics in the Apostle's days of that world which was not of the Father? Who is not ready to point out the vices which degrade all around him? Who is not ready to censure the criminal propensities of all his fellow mortals of every rank and every age? the luxury and pride of the great, the discontent and profligacy of the poor, the light vanity and reckless dissipation of youth, the mean cunning and turbulent ambition of manhood, the unfeeling selfishness and sordid avarice of age. These are the ordinary topics of conversation, and to deny the truth of any of these assertions would be deemed insanity itself. Shall we then treat the assertion of the Apostle as the offspring of superstitious gloom or austere seclusion? Oh, no! Each in his view of his brother's conduct but establishes its truth. There is, however, one step further; one of infinite and transcendent importance. Has no impression of religious duty, no admonition of conscience ever made us tremble at the recollection of past misconduct, of obligations neglected, of offences committed? Oh, that we were wise, that we understood this; that we would use the same diligence, the same severity in examining our own conduct, which we exercise in surveying that of others, that we would attend to the voice which warns us from within, that we would patiently submit to its admonitions, that we would impartially follow its guidance.

But unfortunately such retrospect is most offensive to human vanity, and seldom indeed is the individual to be found, who has courage to make the melancholy survey of his conduct. Every germ of pride in our consti-

tution, every inherent desire of present enjoyment will unite to banish from our contemplation, as baneful intruders upon our peace, the sad train of disappointed hopes, of short-lived gaieties, of criminal pleasures, which have been our successive occupation from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age. Our pride cannot condescend to acknowledge that we have devoted so many years of anxiety, so great a portion of that period, which has been allotted for our sojourn here, to those pursuits from which we can derive no fruit. Our pride will gladly hide the blush of shame which mantles on our cheek in the feverish excitement of intoxicating amusements, and will drown the voice of conscience in the loud tumult of worldly pursuits, sure of finding too powerful an auxiliary in that thirst for pleasure, that idle levity which would banish every rational, every sober thought as fit only for the retirement of the cloister or the decrepitude of age which can no longer mix in the gay scenes of earthly enjoyment.

Oh, that my warning voice could rouse you, my brethren, to banish far from your minds this dangerous levity, this sin that doth so easily beset you. Oh, that my voice could rouse you to survey with all the severity of truth the occupations of the past, to examine how much of your past life, how much of the past year, nay even how much of the past week, has been devoted to your God, has been devoted to the interests of eternity. Let but the impressions, which the solemnity of this place, the temple of the living God, must make upon every heart, produce their proper effect, and the voice of conscience will be heard. The mind once roused from its slumber, from its sleep of death, will no longer be dazzled by the false glare of present enjoyment, or deceived by the gay delusions of hope, and will appre-

ciate duly the value of all those pursuits for which it had been giving up its hopes of eternity. The gaudy scenes of earthly splendour will present themselves in all their native deformity, will exhibit but the drudgery of dissipation, the meanness of avarice, or the tumult of ambition. What fruit had ye in those things, ye that are the redeemed of the LORD, ye that are delivered from the bondage of sin and death?

It is true we may invent amusements, we may riot in forbidden pleasures to drown the voice of conscience, we may succeed in the attempt,—but the time will come, is now at hand, when all our efforts must be vain. While health and prosperity gild our days, while this gay scene fills our mouth with laughter and our tongue with joy, we may sail down the current of life without one warning voice being heard to tell us that our course leads to that gulf which will inclose us for ever, which is now yawning for our destruction. But a continuance of this calm serenity cannot be secured by man; the arrows of the Almighty will strike him, their poison will drink up his spirit, the terrors of the LORD will ere long set themselves in array against him. Yes, my brethren, on the bed of sickness, on the bed of death, the voice of conscience will be heard, the voice of conscience will sound in our ears, What fruit had ye in the pursuits of your past life?

What use, you will say, in recapitulating this trite, this common-place topic,—what use in making this place echo, each returning day, these well-known truths? Yes, my brethren, all I have said is trite and common-place; all I have said is sounded in your ears periodically by the ministers of God; all I have said is confirmed by the experience of each returning day; but I will ask you, are these remarks, therefore, rendered less neces-

sary? You may admit them as true, but does your conduct show your conviction? Do you elevate your thoughts beyond the short-lived gaieties of mortality, and do you regard with indifference the rewards which this world holds out to its votaries? Do you act as if you were to crawl only for a few short hours on this earth and then seek your eternal resting-place, that seat which the redeeming love of your Saviour purchased for you with his most precious blood? To such questions what answers can we give? what, with truth, except that this world occupies every thought, every wish, every hope; that in this world is our treasure, and in this world our hearts also.

Is then the Christian to withdraw himself from the concerns of this life? Is he to renounce all worldly cares? Is he, with his mind abstracted from this earth, to consign all to the care of Providence, himself careless and indifferent? No, my brethren, these are not the doctrines of our Redeemer, these are not the pursuits which the Apostle appeals to as having no fruit. The Christian is to work out his salvation with diligence and activity, suited to his present condition and his future hopes. His reward is to be attained by an active course of duty in this his day of probation and discipline. Diligence in our respective vocations is an obligation which nature and religion equally impose. When, on the transgression of our first parent, the Almighty cursed the ground for his sake, labour became the indispensable lot of humanity; the laws of nature attached its necessary punishment to idleness, and the voice of revelation confirmed the sentence. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat;" and with the command to be "fervent in spirit" was joined that of not being "slothful in business." The religion

of our blessed Lord never forbid that moderated and well-directed attention to our worldly interests which the duties of our different stations require, never commanded us to forego our place and occupation in this mighty sphere. But it does condemn, even appeals to the voice of reason to condemn, as having no fruit, that extravagant uneasiness about the future, that feverish and restless activity which harasses the wretched spirit that indulges it, those corroding cares and visionary hopes which distract the children of this world.

But it may be asked, it has been asked, does the profession of a Christian exclude him from all pleasurable intercourse with the world? Are the charms of society among those things whereof he is to be ashamed? Must the Christian shut out the voice of joy from his dwelling? Certainly not. Ours, my brethren, is not an austere master, who requires a rigorous and formal service. The dispositions He delights in, are not the offspring of superstition, of melancholy, of morose or gloomy retirement. The precepts He delivered were dictated by the mercy and goodness of that great Being "who knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust." The LORD has given us all things richly to enjoy. He neither prevents the young man from rejoicing in his youth, nor calls upon the rich to give up the blessings of Providence, nor commands the great to lay down the honours which he has bestowed upon them. The Divine love permits us to partake with innocence every comfort and every blessing appropriate to our situation—holds out to our acceptance all the rational pleasures, which arise from the mixed constitution of our nature, the enjoyment of the works of creation, the intercourse of friendship and the indulgence of the social feelings in all the varied relations of life,

and never interposes its authority but to enhance their value by regulating their influence and extending their duration. Vain would be all the arguments for the divine origin of our faith drawn from its harmony with the attributes of an all-wise and all-merciful Creator, if it crushed every propensity to happiness which cheers us in our journey through this vale of misery, if it stifled every generous, every amiable feeling, and left but one wide waste of gloomy despondency and anxious care—if it taught that to be a Christian you must cease to be a man.

But, my brethren, the Apostle does condemn the conduct of those who form inadequate ideas of their heavenly calling, who expect to reconcile the service of their God with the slavery of this world, who confine their affections to the sordid objects of mortality, and know no pursuit more worthy than labouring for their acquirement. I speak not of those more criminal pursuits, which no professing Christian is daring enough to justify; I speak not of that open profligacy, that daring profaneness which sets at defiance the precepts of our holy religion; but I do speak of that immoderate indulgence in amusements, not blameable in themselves, nor, within certain bounds, injurious to ourselves, which fixes the mind upon this earth, takes from their proper objects the best affections of the heart, disqualifies the mind for enjoyments of a purer kind, and casts a degree of contempt upon the glorious blessings which CHRIST has purchased for us with his most precious blood. Need I attempt to prove how necessary is the admonition of the preacher at the present day? Need I attempt to show how incumbent it is upon him to warn his flock of this besetting sin? Amusements which formerly only filled the vacant hours of business have

now become to many their portion in this life, and in the labour which they take under the sun. Shall the Minister of the Gospel be compelled to address a Christian congregation in the language of a heathen philosopher*, and tell them that the life of man is a sacred thing—shall he be obliged to repeat to them the words of a still more celebrated writer†, that man was not created to waste his time in the pursuits of dissolute and continued mirth; that his destination was more dignified, more elevated. But I will not, I must not desert the high station upon which the ambassador of CHRIST is placed; I will not descend to the low calculations of worldly wisdom. I address a Christian congregation; upon them I must impress the commands of their Saviour and their GOD: “Watch ye, and pray always that ye be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man.” “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.”

These are the considerations, these are the motives which should stimulate every one of us, my beloved brethren, to raise our souls to nobler pursuits and loftier prospects than these transitory scenes afford. These are the hopes, these are the tidings of great joy unknown to the heathen of old, which make applicable to us the question of our blessed Lord, “What do ye more than others?” Do ye no longer surrender your hearts to the world, are ye no longer the slaves of avarice, of ambition, of pride? Do you scorn to enjoy the pleasures of a sin for a season having respect to the recompense of reward? Do you bear with patience the loss of worldly goods,

* Seneca.

† Cicero,

knowing you have in heaven a better and enduring substance? Do you run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto JESUS who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God?

But who, you will say, is sufficient for these things? The Christian; for his sufficiency is of GOD. It is GOD that girdeth him with strength, and "maketh his way acceptable unto himself." Be not disheartened, my brethren, in the pursuit, when an eternal crown of glory is the high prize which will await the success of your exertions. Be not dismayed by the difficulties which oppose your progress, when the arm of the Almighty is your support; when his HOLY SPIRIT is your guide and director, when the Son of GOD Himself, your all-merciful Redeemer, is the judge, who will reward your labours and realize your hopes. If such be your hopes, even now commence the work of reformation—turn to GOD in the time of your health and strength, before the evil days come and the years draw nigh of which you will say, We have no pleasure in them—before your understanding be too weak for the deliberate exercise of repentance, and before your will become too strong to bow beneath its yoke. Delay not in a business of such vital importance, in the preparation for eternal happiness.

Hesitate not one moment, my beloved brethren, lest the LORD your GOD cause darkness, and lest your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. Who is there amongst us, my brethren, that can be assured he will see even the close of that year into which we have advanced so far? How many entered upon it with us full of the same hopes and the same expectations, the same gay anticipations of lengthened

enjoyment, who have ere half its course was run vanished from among the children of men and have left their stations to be occupied by others! How many have been summoned from life to death, from time to eternity, and are now awaiting a resurrection of life or a resurrection of damnation! So shall it be in that portion which is to come. Ere its close many of us may be summoned to meet our Redeemer and our Judge. Were it certain, my brethren, that even but one of us were in that period to sleep in the dust, should not that conviction be sufficient to rouse the slumbering conscience of every individual who hears me; should it not prompt each of us to look up to his Saviour in awful suspense, and ask with the voice of suppliant inquiry, "Lord, is it I?" Can the young boast himself in the vigour of his manhood, in the flower of his age, in the pride of his strength? Ah, no! the arrows of death mock the human distinctions of youth and age, of decrepitude and vigour; "one dieth in his full strength," "another dieth in the bitterness of his soul;" "they shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." What an awful warning to them that remain! yes, to them, young and old, the hand of death will come as a thief in the night, and when it is raised to inflict the fatal blow, they will awake as from a dream. Ask them at that moment, are the fears, which they ridiculed or silenced, the visionary dreams of the enthusiast or the fanatic? Ask them, what fruit have they in the pleasures of their past life, what worlds would they give to recall but one of those precious hours which they had wasted in idleness and folly? Ask them, and if you are satisfied with their answer, follow their example. Ask them, my brethren, and let their answer sink deep into your hearts. Keep ever present to your minds the anguish you must suffer

if that awful hour reaches you, when your work is still unfinished; the torment you will endure at the recollection of those moments which you have wasted in trifles. To your ear as to theirs the Angel of the LORD is even now ready to send his terrible voice, ready to lift up his hand to heaven, and to swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there shall be time no longer.

May the awful summons find us watching, with our lamps burning, and like unto men expecting the coming of the LORD, that so "through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen."

MEANS OF PEACE AND EDIFICATION.

A SERMON

PREACHED BY THE

REV. JOHN H. STEPHENSON, M.A.,

RECTOR OF CORRINGTON,

AT THE

VISITATION OF THE VENERABLE THE ARCHDEACON OF ESSEX,

APRIL 16, 1844.

ROMANS XIV. 19.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

IT would be beside the purpose for which we are this day assembled, were I to *dwell* upon those peculiar circumstances in the state of the Christians at Rome, which drew this exhortation from St. Paul. Let it be sufficient to observe, that there were divisions among them, unseemly divisions which both disturbed the unity of the Church and threw a stumbling-block in the way of those who might otherwise have sought admission into her pale. As a remedy for these evils, the Apostle charges them to follow *peace* and mutual *edification*. Let them desist from "doubtful disputations," uncharitable judgments, severe reflections on the conduct of their brethren. These were wholly unbecoming their character as disciples of Him, whose most *earnest* and almost his *last* injunction to his followers was, that they "should love one another," love one another, "*even as He had loved them.*" By strife and division they would weaken his cause, and impede its progress in the world;

they would make themselves a laughing-stock to their enemies, and afford a triumph to that malignant spirit whose efforts never were, and never will be, wanting when mischief may be done to the Church. Let them shun these evils with the utmost care, and pursue a course the very opposite, *i. e.*, "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

It is obvious, my reverend brethren, that in this exhortation there is nothing of local peculiarity, nothing which restricts its application to the special occasion which gave it birth, but on the contrary, that whenever and wherever a similar occasion arises, it is equally applicable, and should be regarded as coming with the same weight, and enforced by the same authority as when it was first delivered.

It is confessedly difficult to form a just estimate of our own times, because *recent* impressions will always be the most vivid, and the magnitude of objects close to the eye can hardly fail of being overrated when compared with those which are distant. We may therefore hope that the assertion was somewhat too broadly and strongly made,—that at no period within the last century were divisions in the Church more rife, controversies more bitterly maintained, and dissensions between the clergy and their parishioners, and the clergy and their bishops, of such frequent occurrence as at the present time.—I think we may venture to say, that the pencil which drew this picture was dipped in colour of too dark a shade. But taking a more temperate view of the case, must it not be confessed that during the last six or seven years, and especially during the last twelve months, the Church has approached too nearly to that state which the Apostle is in this chapter censuring? Have we not

seen too much strife and division, and too little unity and brotherly love? and in some instances has not a dutiful submission to lawful authority been superseded either by contumacious resistance, or still oftener by the manifestation of a temper the very reverse of that which the relative situation of the parties rendered fitting,—pride, arrogance, and conceit, where respect and deference were due.

GOD forbid, my reverend brethren, that I should fall into the error into which many well-intentioned men have fallen, who, in their zeal for the purity of the Church, have exaggerated every trifling imperfection, and held up every latent blemish to the pity or the scorn of the world. GOD forbid I should do anything like this; but it were folly to affect blindness to what every one does see and must see. When things are glaringly prominent, it is useless shutting one's eyes to them, and speaking and acting as if they did not exist.

Permit me, then, to treat the counsel contained in the text as not wholesome merely, but *seasonable*; called for by the circumstances of the times, and suited, under the Divine blessing, to advance the purpose for which we are now met together.

The text proposes to us two objects of pursuit, *peace* and *edification*, and I beg your indulgence while I offer a few suggestions, calculated, as I conceive, to further their attainment. The suggestions I wish to make are of the simplest kind, possessing no pretension to originality, nor having anything to recommend them except their obvious utility.

I. We will first consider the “things which make for peace.” It is one distinguishing feature of the controversies of the present day, that they are absolutely *forced* upon our attention. It is next to impossible for any

one to abstain from taking some interest in questions which are discussed in every shape, not in sermons and charges alone, where we might naturally expect to find them, but in publications of a secular character, and even in the daily newspapers. They are not confined to our universities, the natural arena for the agitation of such questions, but they have pervaded the whole length and breadth of the land, till there is hardly a village so small, remote, and isolated, but party names and party feelings have found their way thither.

Under these circumstances, and considering, too, that the matters in dispute affect more or less the discharge of his daily duties, it is impossible that *any* parish priest should remain an unconcerned spectator. He *must* form his opinions. Those opinions cannot be entirely buried in his own bosom. They *will* come abroad. Small as his sphere may be, he is a public man, a "city set upon an hill" which cannot be hid. His *practice*, if not his *lips*, will betray his sentiments; and hence, unless due caution be used, he may easily be brought into collision with his own flock, with some of his clerical brethren, or even with his ecclesiastical superiors. This is no improbable supposition; instances of the kind have already occurred and of course may occur again.

I trust, therefore, that I shall be excused for attempting to point out what may in relation to such cases be classed among the "things which make for peace." Let me mention

1. A disposition to do justice to the *motives* of those who differ from us.

Their *conduct* and their *avowed opinions* we may feel ourselves conscientiously compelled to protest against, but with their *motives* we really have nothing to do. We

cannot with any certainty ascertain what they are, and our conjectures are very liable to be mistaken. To attribute their adoption of any particular tenets or practices, to motives which they disavow; to represent them as having ulterior designs which they are afraid to acknowledge, or to hold them responsible for consequences which have no necessary and inevitable connection with their opinions, is not to seek peace, but to stir up strife; to fan, and not to extinguish the flame. We should rather endeavour by giving our opponents credit for all they can reasonably ask as regards *motives* and *intention*, and by avoiding the use of harsh and irritating language when condemning what we esteem their errors; to preserve or restore, as the case may be, an amicable feeling, and to reduce the points of difference within as small a compass as may be. This "makes for peace." So also does

2. Care to rate at their true value, and no more, the matters in dispute.

There are essentials and non-essentials, and we should avoid attaching to the latter an undue importance. For "the faith once delivered to the saints" we ought to be ready, if need were, even to lay down our lives, but this faith is not so frequently perilled as eager disputants would have us suppose. It is, for the most part, matters by no means of primary importance, which are the subjects of controversy, and we shall best approve ourselves lovers of peace, by divesting such matters of the imaginary consequence they have acquired in the heat of argument, and reducing them to their proper level. We shall then discover, at least in many cases, how little there was to justify the warmth and pertinacity with which they were attacked and defended.

3. To abstain from identifying ourselves with a party

will be found eminently conducive to the maintenance of peace. Parties, however right at the outset, almost invariably run into extremes; and moderate men, when they unhappily become attached to them, are induced to go beyond what their better judgment approves, rather than incur the reproach of having deserted their friends. He, therefore, who would seek peace must not suffer himself to become a partisan. Truth must be his object; he must seek it wherever it is likely to be met with, and embrace it wherever it is found.

4. It may further be observed, that few things more directly "make for peace," than taking pains to make ourselves fully acquainted with subjects in dispute, before we form our opinion of them. We should suspend our judgment until we are in possession of as complete information as circumstances will allow; and the more important the question agitated, the more extensive should be our inquiries, and the greater our care to have facts and arguments fully and fairly before us, before we attempt to draw conclusions. If men will be satisfied with imperfect, prejudiced, second-hand, information; if, for instance, they will be content to learn an author's sentiments from the representations of his opponents; if they confine their reading to works which advocate their own views, without ever looking into what may be said on the other side, how can it fail but that prejudices will be strengthened, the breach widened, and all chance of peace lost.

5. A readiness frankly to acknowledge an error, when we are convinced of it, and to retract what we may have said, written, or done, under the influence of error, is eminently conducive to peace. However ingenuous our natural disposition may be, cases will arise in which it will require a strong effort candidly to confess that we

have been in the wrong—have, by some means or other been misled, and formed a rash and mistaken judgment. Yet as no one—at least, no Protestant—pretends to be infallible, no one having become conscious of an error, should be ashamed to acknowledge it. Notwithstanding the temporary humiliation sometimes attendant on such an acknowledgment, it will invariably be found to be, in the end, the wisest and happiest course. Persistence in error will at each step involve us in fresh perplexities, while the difficulty of retreat is every moment increased.

Unquestionably it is greatly to be regretted that a clergyman should ever be obliged to admit that he has acted or spoken unadvisedly, more particularly in cases of disagreement with his own parishioners. But the pain of such an admission is to be escaped, not by an obstinate perseverance in a course which he has discovered to be wrong, but by habituating himself to the exercise of caution, coolness, and prudence. In matters of importance he should take no step without sufficient time for deliberation. He should not depend implicitly on his own judgment, but seek competent, and, as far as may be, impartial advice; and, if the business is of such a nature as warrants his doing so, he should consult his ecclesiastical superiors. By doing this at the outset, he will entitle himself to their subsequent support, and be spared the mortification of having their decision against him.

II. Having so far considered the things which make for *peace*, it remains that we direct our attention to the latter clause of the text, in which the Apostle urges us to the pursuit of things which tend to *edification*:—“Things wherewith one may edify another.” We, my reverend brethren, are called to the high dignity of being fellow-workers with God in the construction of

that spiritual temple of which every real Christian is a living stone. To this work we have most solemnly devoted ourselves, and we cannot fulfil our engagements, unless we make it the chief aim of our lives to do so. No doubt there are many other duties which have strong claims upon us, *e. g.*, the promotion of the temporal welfare of our parishioners and neighbours; the cultivation of our minds; the education of our families; and, though last not least, the extension of the interests of that branch of CHRIST's Holy Catholic Church to which we have the happiness to belong.

But we must never forget that these are secondary cares when compared with the task of "seeking for CHRIST's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, and by our labour, care, and diligence bringing them unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of GOD, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in CHRIST, that there be no place left among them either for error in religion or for viciousness of life." This edifying or building up of the body of CHRIST is to be our chief business. And among the means to be employed for this end,—

1. The first place must be assigned to a plain and faithful declaration of "the truth as it is in JESUS."

We are put in trust with the Gospel, and that trust must be discharged with integrity. We are "stewards of the mysteries of GOD," and "it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful." We must take heed that we deliver to our flock that and that alone "which also we have received of the LORD," not human theories, not abstruse speculations, not puerile conceits, but the doctrines and precepts of Holy Scripture. "*Rightly* dividing the word of truth." Giving to each member of our

Master's household his "portion of meat in due season," and, keeping back, "reserving," nothing which is profitable for them. In the execution of this part of our office, it is not enough that we are neither promulgating error or wilfully suppressing truth, but we must be diligent to set forth truth in all its due proportions, according to the pattern of Holy Scripture, giving to each several part its due relative prominence, and not bringing forward some at the expense of others, of equal or even greater moment.

All men are liable, according to the natural bent of their minds or to the bias received from education and early associations, to take partial views of Scripture, and to attach to some one or other class of doctrines a disproportionate importance. This tendency must be closely watched, or the people committed to our care will resemble hot-house plants, which have been suffered to stand too long in the same position, and so are drawn all on one side.

2. Among the means of edification which every minister is bound to use, *his own example* cannot be denied the *second* place: some have even claimed the *first* for it. St. Paul lays *great stress* upon it in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus; so, likewise, does the Church in her Ordination Service; and therefore, though fully alive to the delicacy with which this topic should be treated, I must not entirely omit the mention of it. We have each solemnly promised, that, "the LORD being our helper, we will be diligent to frame and fashion ourselves and our families according to the doctrine of CHRIST, and to make ourselves and them, as much as in us lies, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock;" and it calls for unfeigned thankfulness to ALMIGHTY GOD that the instances of flagrant violation of this promise are

very rare. But, my reverend brethren, that there is room for us, one and all, to exhibit to the world a more striking exemplification of "the mind that was in CHRIST JESUS" will no more be questioned, than that the happiest effects would result from such an exhibition.

There is room for us to bring our lives into a closer conformity with our public instructions, and that more especially in the minor details of Christian duty; such, for instance, as the maintenance of a devotional habit. Cecil has remarked how much the Church of Rome has at all times owed to a devotional habit in her Clergy. Perhaps, with them, this habit may in too many instances have been merely assumed. It is, however, not the *assumption*, but the careful *cultivation* of it, which I would recommend.

Man has been defined, a religious animal, and not improperly, at least so far as this, that he has for the most part an innate respect for religion; and while hypocrisy and affectation will seldom fail to disgust him, he does expect, and reasonably too, that the ministers of religion—men whose business lies with eternity, and who claim to be received as the ambassadors of the Most High God, should exhibit in their general deportment, a sense of the weight and dignity of their office. And it may safely be asserted that they never fail in this particular, never divest themselves of their sacred character, and sink the clergyman in the gentleman, the scholar, or the man of business, without forfeiting a portion of that respect which would otherwise be cheerfully accorded them. Consistency will command respect, and in no one more so than in a clergyman.

Let it, therefore, my reverend brethren, ever be our aim to approve ourselves the same men out of the pulpit that we are in it. Let us strive to evidence by our daily

walk and conversation that our “affections are **REALLY** set on things above;” and that, like our Divine Master, though dwelling *in* the world we are not *of* the world. Let us show on all occasions by the command we have over our tempers—by a most scrupulous regard to veracity—by a prompt forgiveness of injuries—by a readiness to forego our rights, (when we are under no paramount obligation to assert them,)—by the cheerful sacrifice of our own ease and convenience at the call of duty and for the benefit of others—by an indifference to earthly distinctions, gratifications and amusements—by abstaining not from evil only but from “the appearance” of it—by zeal in every good work—by meekness, humility, gravity and “sound speech which cannot be condemned;”—let us show by these things, that we believe what we teach, and lay no burdens on others but what we bear ourselves. Let it be our hallowed ambition by these and similar means to “shine as lights in the world,” and to be, as St. Paul exhorts Timothy, “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,” “showing ourselves in all things a pattern of good works.”

3. Bear with me, my reverend brethren, while I make on this part of our subject one observation more, and that is, that we cannot effectually promote the edification of our flocks unless in all our ministrations we *make edification our aim*.

In all our parochial arrangements—in the details of divine service—in our private studies, and in the selection of topics for the pulpit, this should be made our first and most immediate object. St. Paul’s exhortation,* should be constantly present to our mind, “Let all things

* 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

be done unto *edifying*;" and this inspired rubric should be our guide in all matters which are left to our own discretion. Happily as regards the ordering of divine service, the things which are left to our own discretion are but few, and for myself I sincerely wish they were fewer still. Where the Church has given express directions, or injunctions have been issued by those whose station authorizes them to interpret what is obscure, and to set in order what is wanting, our path is plain; we are relieved of responsibility, and have only to "follow, with a glad mind and will, their godly admonitions, and submit ourselves to their godly judgments."

In all such cases let us beware of fancying ourselves better judges than they are of what is convenient and becoming. The eminence they occupy gives them greater facilities for observation than we possess, and enables them to estimate more accurately the various bearings of such questions as the present feverish state of the Church and of society brings before them. Besides which it should never be forgotten, that in all matters which are not "clean contrary to God's holy word, or to the law of England," they are our legitimate guides, divinely appointed, and, on our part, voluntarily acknowledged; therefore in seeking direction from them, we are certainly using the most likely means to discover our path of duty.

Still there are some things which are discretionary with us; and in these it behoves us to adopt such measures as most obviously tend to edification, avoiding, as far as in us lies, whatever is likely to give offence. Let no one imagine that in things indifferent, concession to the prejudices of others betrays a want of confidence in our own judgment or in the goodness of our cause, or is in any way discreditable. It should rather be viewed

as a Christian duty, a "following of the things which make for peace." While we ought not *lightly* to depart from the godly institutions of our forefathers, we should bear in mind that it is possible to be *too* tenacious of adherence to ancient forms. In this country the habits and usages of society, the whole style of living, thinking, and feeling, has undergone a total revolution in the course of the last century, and unless we are content (where there is no positive ordinance forbidding it) that the externals of religion should, in some small degree, sympathize with the general change, we shall be in danger of throwing a stumbling-block in our brothers' way and narrowing the door of admission into the purest and most Apostolic Church on earth. We should be careful to contend only for what is worth contention, and should remember that there may be as much substantial innovation in reviving practices which have become obsolete, as in introducing such as were never before heard of.

Let it not, however, be supposed that under the notion of promoting edification I am recommending a truckling to the humours and fancies of the day. That a minister should govern himself by the opinions of his flock, and shape his conduct to their tastes and caprice, would indeed be to "become all things to all men," but certainly not in the sense which the Apostle intended. Temporary applause may be the fruit of such unworthy submission, but not lasting respect, and still less edification. It is (and deeply do I lament that such a course should ever be pursued), it is an inversion of the true position of the parties. It is the parent taking the place of the child—the teacher that of the scholar. Peace and edification are not to be obtained by such methods. The divine blessing can then only be expected when every man keeps his own proper station, and labours patiently and

indefatigably to discharge the duties of it. May it ever, my reverend brethren, be our aim to walk by this rule and thus secure the blessing. Without entertaining any jealousy, still less ill will, towards those who separate from us, let us adhere steadfastly to our own principles. Let us show ourselves (and in saying this I address my *lay* no less than my *clerical* brethren), let us show ourselves firm and intelligent Churchmen, not seduced into an abandonment of our principles either by mistaken ideas of conciliation on the one hand, nor on the other by impatience of control and a self-sufficient insubordinate spirit. Our principles (to state them concisely) are these,—that having by GOD's good providence and the piety of former generations become possessed of certain forms of sound words, we will abide by them; we will receive, maintain, and profess such doctrines and such interpretations of Scripture as are therein set forth; will use such decent rites and ceremonies as are therein prescribed; and that *we* (both clergy and laity), abating something of our natural liberty for the sake of peace, order and Christian communion, will submit to the direction and government of our Bishops in all things not repugnant to holy Scripture.

These are, I believe, the principles of true Churchmanship, and if we act upon them I think we may safely challenge those who differ from us, to point out any way in which we may more directly and successfully "follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify another." Let us fervently pray that Almighty God, "who alone worketh great marvels, would send down upon us the healthful spirit of his grace," that we may give ourselves more entirely to the duties of our sacred office, labouring therein patiently, diligently, and faithfully, not diverted

from our work by controversy and “strifes of words” —not dismayed by the threatenings of our adversaries or the gloomy aspect of public affairs—not putting our “trust in princes, or in any child of man,” neither relying on their support nor courting their praise, but lifting up our eyes “unto the hills from whence cometh our help,” and looking for our reward in that day “when the Chief Shepherd shall appear.” “Surely our judgment is with the LORD, and our work with our God.”

"A DEATH UNTO SIN, AND A NEW BIRTH UNTO
RIGHTEOUSNESS*," AS ENFORCED BY ST. PAUL
FROM THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

REV. HENRY CURTIS CHERRY, M.A.,

RECTOR OF BURGHFIELD, BERKS; AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. . .
LORD DE SAUMAREZ.

ROMANS VI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

DID an inspired servant of God, who, by "the HOLY GHOST" had been especially separated "for the work whereunto he was called," think it a duty incumbent on him to disabuse the first converts to Christianity of the prevailing errors, which were industriously and insidiously circulated in his day to turn them from the faith they had embraced? Did St. Paul, an accredited ambassador of heaven, by one of the most powerful of arguments, drawn from the Sacrament of Baptism, find it absolutely necessary to shield his exposition of God's free and unmerited grace in the justification of a sinner from the false glosses, which the enemies of their salva-

* The Catechism of the Church of England.

tion had attached to the Apostle's own words, in order to depreciate, among such as by that rite had been admitted within the pale of the visible Church, the "unspeakable gift" of a Saviour? As in those days of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, so in our own, how remarkably has this his prediction been fulfilled! "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

We say it advisedly, that though the misinterpretations of the word of God, which assail the ears and hearts of our weaker brethren, do not now amount to a virtual denial of "the Lord that bought them" in those who, unsettled themselves in the faith, are seeking "to draw away disciples after them," yet many and grievous are the false views and doctrines that are propagated in the present day on the great truths of the Gospel; not less so, on the same subject, in reference to which St. Paul addressed the words before us to the Christians of Rome. Hence, my brethren, if there did not already exist the solemn obligation, which every Minister of the Reformed Church is under, by his ordination vow, of being "ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word*," it follows as a necessary consequence of our having been baptized into the same faith, and of our having undertaken to preach the same truths, which St. Paul preached, that we, the authorized Ministers of the Gospel, should be equally solicitous of guarding our hearers against receiving any licentious or carnal application of the Scriptures, as contained in the Epistles of that eminent believer, and faithful "servant of JESUS CHRIST."

* From the Ordering of Priests.

The opening of the chapter, from whence the Epistle for this day* is chosen, was directed expressly against the gross perversion, which had been made by "false brethren," of those great truths, previously delivered by St. Paul. To this circumstance the Apostle Peter appears particularly to allude, when he exhorts every believer to make an holy construction of the forbearance of God, and not hence, as the slanderers of St. Paul's doctrine, to conclude, that God can be otherwise than extremely displeased with sin: but so to view the Divine patience and long-suffering as pre-eminently displayed in order to the bringing of every sinner to repentance, and by repentance to salvation. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for the coming of the day of God," *i. e.*, when every true believer shall "lift up" his head with joy, for his "redemption draweth nigh," "be diligent," says St. Peter, "that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our LORD is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Was it, think we, this Apostle meant we should infer that many things, much less that all things, which were written by St. Paul, are beyond our comprehension? His expression is "some things" only, which men of a wavering judgment in matters of religion are apt to torture in a sense, which was never intended: such men therefore, in the judgment of St. Peter, cannot but be endangering

* The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

their salvation by pertinaciously asserting and maintaining doctrines, at variance with the express will of God, as delivered by St. Paul, by the other Apostles, and by "the Prophets" before them, "who" had "spoken in the name of the LORD."

The all-important doctrine insisted upon by St. Paul, included the following particulars; viz.: that the Almighty, out of his exceeding goodness and love to mankind, had interposed between Him and his offending creatures "the righteousness" of the "second man, the Lord from heaven," as the saving cause of acceptance in His sight for the guilty descendants of "the first man, who" was "of the earth, earthy." "Now," affirms this preacher of "the righteousness which is by faith,"—now, in the present dispensation of the riches of Gospel grace, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in JESUS." Thus it was that St. Paul made known to the fallen children of Adam (for "as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy,") that the Divine forbearance had extended unto them, even to the latest generation, the meritorious sufferings and death of "the last Adam," as more effectual in their consequences towards the restoration and salvation of

sinners than the introduction of sin into the world by "the first man Adam" had been instrumental to their destruction.

The whole of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans flows with the mercies of Redemption, as purchased *solely* through the accepted righteousness of God's beloved Son. Hear its eloquent author declaring; "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord JESUS CHRIST, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

And that this justification, or the being *accounted* righteous in the view of an heart-searching God, might not be ascribed to any virtues or deservings of our own, ("for what is man," born in sin and conceived in iniquity, "that he should be clean, or that he should be righteous?") he lays down emphatically, that our being so adjudged and entitled to the divine long-suffering or favour is the sole gift of God's free grace through JESUS CHRIST, "unto all and upon all them that believe" in that only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;" *i.e.*, without any boast or vain glory in regard to any excellency, either real or supposed, as belonging to ourselves. "For not as it

was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, JESUS CHRIST: therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by JESUS CHRIST our Lord." This was the sum of that doctrine in regard to the freeness of Almighty grace exercised towards sinners, for and on account of the all-perfect righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, which St. Paul preached. He truly, both in word and deed, accounted "that the long suffering of our LORD" was the *sole* cause of our "salvation." What wonder then, that any abuse of such truths, whereby the necessity for a holy and religious life was dispensed with, and any such argument was resorted to, that because GOD's mercy was great, and had provided a means of restoration to his favour, a licence was to be inferred for man's continuance in sin, in order that the riches of Divine compassion might be more visibly shown forth;—what wonder then, I repeat, that so sensual an application of St. Paul's words should have called forth his indignation and abhorrence? "What," he asks, "shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? GOD forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

We pass on now to the great argument drawn from the Sacrament of Baptism by this champion of the "truth," to show that a directly contrary conclusion was to be arrived at; and that so far from any such inference for a continuance in sin being countenanced by the plan of Almighty Wisdom in the mercies of Redemption, the very obligation of every baptized Christian is a virtual renunciation of all sin, and an implied uniform endeavour, by GOD's assisting grace, so to improve the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, dispensed at baptism, that he may, not nominally, but in deed and truth, be said to be "dead unto sin," and regenerated or "born again" unto "newness of life." The language of our incomparable Baptismal Service is a direct negative to any assumption like this, that because the "grace" of GOD abounds,—"*His compassions fail not,*"—and He is not "*extreme to mark what is done amiss**," a dispensation is thereby given to act otherwise than all, who have been brought to the font in baptism, either by their sureties in infancy, or personally in maturer years, have pledged themselves to do. They were received "into the congregation of CHRIST's flock, and" signed "with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter," *i. e.*, from this their death unto sin, and their new birth unto righteousness, they "shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of CHRIST crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue CHRIST's faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end." The mode of expression in the exhortation to the sponsors is, as closely as possible, assimilated to the very words of St. Paul. Therein they are urged to remember "always, that Baptism doth represent unto us

* Prayer-book version of Psalm cxxx. 3.

our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour CHRIST, and to be made like unto Him; that as He died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness: continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." "So far, indeed," observed an able prelate of our Church*, "is St. Paul," and we may add our excellent Church also in her baptismal offices, "from inculcating faith without works, in the common and offensive meaning of the term, that it would be no easy matter to point out in any one of his Epistles so many as twenty verses (we subjoin, twenty lines likewise in the Book of Common Prayer,) without some severe and painful remonstrance on the danger of sinful indulgences; some earnest exhortation to purity of life, as a proof—the only proof which GOD will accept—of the new heart and nature of which baptism is the image; and which, if it be not really wrought in us, our ceremonial baptism is worse than vain."

True it is, then, that our justification is the sole gift of grace from above: to "the long-suffering of our LORD" alone we are indebted, "that we are not consumed" and given over to destruction both of soul and body: but *the same grace*, and *the same long-suffering*, which "remembered us in our low estate," and have "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the" death and "resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead," have, with the effusion of GOD's preventing and assisting blessing in the Sacrament of Baptism, made every endeavour to avail ourselves of *both* indispensable to "the end of" our "faith," which is "even the salvation of" our "souls."

* BISHOP HEBER.

Else how needless the injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." How a "newness of life" unto which we have been called, when we pledged ourselves to "renounce the devil, the world and the flesh;" to "believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and" obediently to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life"—how such a *new birth* or *regeneration* unto "newness of life," (which unquestionably, in the sense of our Church, takes place in the baptismal sacrament,) can be consistently entered upon and persevered in by a continuance in sin, or without aiming at all "the fruits of righteousness," I need not pause to discuss. Nor is it necessary now to prove, that they have widely mistaken the nature of this *new birth* who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness," and contrary to St. Paul's own conviction, that he had not "already attained, either were already perfect," go "about to establish their own righteousness," and are thus priding themselves on any assurance of salvation. "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid," adds the Apostle. "How shall we that are dead to sin," *i. e.*, with such a change wrought in us at baptism, as is termed—aye, and in St. Paul's own judgment and language, "a death unto sin," and a "newness of life," how shall we "live any longer in sin?"

Again; what, shall we, though born in sin—yet "re-generated" thus by the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT, and accepted *only* upon the implied conditions of faith and repentance, in and for the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, our Redeemer, shall we cherish in our hearts one of the most deadly passions that can be implanted therein, self-glorious pride, by presuming for a moment that we are secure? God forbid. "How shall we," that are, by our

profession, "dead to sin," thus violate the command of CHRIST, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." His invitation is addressed to the "weary and heavy laden" with a sense of their own infirmities; not to the proud and self-sufficient. These last are not the objects of the promise, attached to his bidding; "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

If we feel no pleasure in sin; then are we "dead to sin:" then, though in our regenerate state, some frailties of earth may at times clog our advances to a perfect freedom from all impurities, yet if our wills give them no ready admission—if our hankering after the world is daily diminishing, and so bringing on, hour by hour, that enmity with the world, wherein consists our friendship with GOD—if sanctified and resuscitated to "newness of life," we feel more and more in need of additional grace, illumination and assistance from above, and so are pressing "toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS,"—then, I say, "dead to sin," we may "joy in the GOD of" our "salvation;" humbly thanking Him for the good work begun in us by his HOLY SPIRIT, and imploring Him, with his blessing, to bring it unto perfection. Then may we, fully trusting and *alone* looking to a Saviour's righteousness, not to any thing of our own, for pardon and acceptance with GOD, take up the words of one of our greatest poets, and exclaim, addressing the fountain of salvation,—

"Thy merit

Imparted shall absolve them, who renounce

Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds."

In having thus placed before you your baptismal privileges and baptismal obligations, I would, affectionately, and in conclusion, urge you, one and all, to put this question seriously and impartially to your hearts: "Know

ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into **JESUS CHRIST**, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with **CHRIST** by baptism into death, that like as **CHRIST** was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Archbishop Secker has remarked upon this passage of Scripture, that "the practice of baptizing, by plunging the person under water, thereby burying him, as it were, in the water, and raising him out of it again, was anciently the more usual method. On which account, St. Paul speaks of baptism, as representing both the death or burial and resurrection of **CHRIST**, and what is grounded upon them, our being dead and buried to sin, renouncing it and being acquitted of it; and our rising again to 'walk in newness of life;' being both obliged and enabled to practice for the future every duty of piety and virtue. The other manner of baptizing, by pouring or sprinkling water sufficiently expresses the same two things: our being by this ordinance of baptism 'purified from the guilt of sin, and bound and qualified to keep ourselves pure from the defilement of sin.'" "As ye have, therefore," dearly beloved, "received **CHRIST JESUS** the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of men, and not after **CHRIST**. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Of" *that* "fulness," said the beloved disciple, we have all received, and grace for grace. "Quench not," then, "the Spirit," which was given you at your baptism, and as often as you bring the pledges of your affection, the heirs of immortality, to the healing waters of baptism, fail not to renew for yourselves, as well as to pour

forth for them the supplication of our spiritual mother, the Church. "Humbly we beseech Thee, most merciful Father, to grant that" we and they, "being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with CHRIST in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin; and that, as we are made partakers of the death of thy Son, we may also be partakers of his resurrection; so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, we may all be inheritors of thine everlasting kingdom, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen."

THE END OF THE LAW.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

REV. HENRY MACKENZIE, M.A.,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF GREAT YARMOUTH.

GALATIANS III. 19, 20.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

THE chapter whence these words are taken, is devoted by St. Paul to a defence of the great scripture doctrine of justification by faith. The people of Galatia had been converted to Christianity by the Apostle in the course of his second apostolical journey; but, no long time after his departure from among them, they were visited by certain Jewish teachers who professed to hold a higher commission than that which they stated to have been granted to the Apostle by the Church at Jerusalem. These Judaizing Christians sought to alienate the minds of the new converts from a sole dependance on the alone merits of JESUS CHRIST, and to induce them to submit to the rites and ordinances of the law of Moses, teaching them that except they were circumcised and kept the law, they could not be saved.

Against this pernicious error, so derogatory to the merits of Him whose Gospel the Apostle had taught

them, he raises an indignant protest. Against their assertion of his inferiority he urges the direct call to the apostolate which he had received by the will of God: against their assertions of the necessity of keeping the law he urges his own consistent conduct in resisting Peter at Antioch, and thence takes occasion to point out the reasonable conclusion, "that if righteousness came by the law, then CHRIST had died in vain." There could not be *two* independent causes of justification unto life for the sinner; either CHRIST must be subject to the law, or the law subject to CHRIST: if the former, the death of CHRIST had no efficacy; if the latter, the law had no efficacy. Hence arose the question with which the text opens. The Judaizing teacher who only wished to exalt the law while he could not deny the force of evidence that proved the death of CHRIST, would think here that the Apostle's dilemma rebounded upon himself. "I do not object," he may be supposed to have said, "to your preaching CHRIST as a Saviour—that doctrine is true; but CHRIST himself said that He came not to destroy but to fulfil the law; He is our example, and therefore we should fulfil the law also if we wish to be justified." But were the doctrine of Paul true that the law is abrogated by CHRIST, then GOD would be made *to have given a law to no purpose, and thus convicted of an absurdity*, which is impossible. Let St. Paul explain to us, for what purpose, "*wherefore serveth the law?*"

To this question, which the Apostle inserts in his Epistle, he also gives a full and satisfactory answer: but as it is one that involves several interesting points, and may, perhaps, be rendered more clear by being simplified and explained, I purpose devoting some little time to its consideration and elucidation.

St. Paul commences his explanation of the use of the law of Moses, by saying that "it was added because of transgressions." It was "*added*," therefore was not, so to speak, included in the *original* purpose of God, "because of transgressions," not that the law *made transgression*, but that it was a test whereby transgression might be made manifest, avoided, corrected.

Thus we find the use of the law to have consisted in being a witness for GOD *between the patriarchal and the Christian times*: it was meant to be a standard of God's righteousness, and thus a means of convincing man of his own unrighteousness: it was a test of whatever was holy, and just, and good, and a practical condemnation of all that was impure: it concluded all under sin, that all the world not only *might be*, but might *feel that they were* guilty before GOD: it was a schoolmaster to bring the world to CHRIST, and thus held the place of an intermediate ordinance after God's immediate revelations to the patriarchs had ceased, and before God's mediate revelation by CHRIST was made known!

It would appear, then, that one great object the Apostle had in view in this Epistle, was to show the temporary character of the law, and that it only filled a sphere of subordinate usefulness in the economy of the Divine Government; and so, by lowering their ideas of its dignity to exalt their impressions of the higher dignity of evangelical truth, and the greater necessity of faith in the evangelical promises. And this object we find to be wrought out in the language of the text, where he shows its fleeting character in the assertion that it was only added "until the seed should come." By this expression he proves that there was something that held a higher place in God's purpose than the law: he shows that God had a purpose that was unrestrained, to which

the ordinance of the law was made palpably subservient! God might, indeed, have been deemed slack, as "men count slackness," when for fifteen hundred years they were left in bondage to this law which they would fain believe was meant to be eternal: but here He shows by the mouth of His Apostle, that this was but a waiting till the fulness of time should arrive, and the law that came by Moses give place to the grace and truth that should come by JESUS CHRIST.

But in order to convince you of the correctness of the Apostle's argument, let us compare his words with the facts recorded in the early Scriptures. Here, in the very commencement of the Bible, we find a seed—the seed of the woman—spoken of: here we find a promise of victory over the serpent pledged to that seed: so that undeniably a promise of eventual triumph was made anterior to the law; and the first word of covenant being a word of *promise* on the part of the Creator, FAITH *in the fulfilment of that promise* was implied as the very first condition on the part of the creature. And if we travel a little further on in the Scripture record, we shall find the same idea still more fully developed. To Abraham the promise was made,—“In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” To Isaac the same; and again to Jacob; so that, in all these cases, promise on the part of God, and faith on the part of man, were exhibited as the course of the covenant long before the birth of the law-giver Moses. And if this were not sufficient, we have the very remarkable case of the bold but reckless Esau, who, in the punishment of his faithlessness by the withdrawal of the blessing, bore testimony to the necessity of faith in those who desired to inherit the blessing!

It being thus clearly established that the law of

Moses was not the original covenant, but only "added" as a temporary expedient, "because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the (earlier) promise was made;" and thus an *à priori* argument for the necessity of faith as a means of acceptance with God being corroborated. Let us now look to the following portion of the text, and examine into the meaning of that somewhat obscure passage,—“And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator.”

Two interpretations of this passage seem to suggest themselves naturally to the mind.

1. The word translated “angels,” and from which our English word angel is derived, in its simple sense, means “messengers.” It is not necessarily that spiritual and (to us) invisible messenger which we call an angel, but may mean any one entrusted with the performance of another’s will, or the execution of a commission. Thus we may take “the law” in its fullest sense, comprehending the moral as well as ritual observances enjoined by God, and revealed by Him at various times through Patriarchs, Law-givers, Prophets, and “ready Scribes,” like Ezra; and suppose these to have been the messengers by whom it was ordained, or (more literally) “set in order,” until the time of *the* Mediator arrived, when all the ordinances alike of ceremonial and moral law were fulfilled in Him, even JESUS CHRIST, who “fulfilled all righteousness!”

2. But I confess that this interpretation, however satisfactory it may appear in itself, as an explanation of the meaning of the Apostle’s *words*, does not appear to me to elucidate the Apostle’s *sense* upon the point in question. I prefer, therefore, to abide by the second interpretation, which, while it narrows its signification, applies more closely, and elucidates more satisfactorily its meaning.

St. Paul, you will bear in mind, was still dwelling on the temporary character of the law; this was the keynote of the whole chant in praise of the superiority of faith. He appears, therefore, in this expression, to have a distinct allusion to the giving of the law to Moses, the mediator between God and his people Israel after the patriarchal times had ceased. I conceive hence, that "the law" alluded to in the text was the *ceremonial law*, ordained or set in order by angelic ministers, and conveyed to Moses in the mount, when, for forty days, he was permitted to commune with JEHOVAH, and entrusted to *his* hands as the mediator appointed by God to convey his will to his chosen people Israel!

Now if, as I believe it is, this be a correct explanation of the meaning of the Apostle, we shall find, on carrying out the idea contained therein, that it has a very important connexion with the following portion of the text,—“Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.”

This connexion may not at first appear so clear as I hope to make it; but, if I understand the Apostle's argument, I apprehend his meaning to have been to this effect:—I have shown to you the real use of the law; have explained that it was not God's original covenant, but that it was only intended to fill up a gap, as it were, between the declaration and the fulfilment of the antecedent promise; that during that time it was useful in convincing of sin, and thus leading to a necessity of faith, but had in itself no justifying power, like the faith illustrated in Abraham, when “He believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.” Now I have a still farther object in view: I wish to prove its inferiority, both in the mode of its revelation and in the person of its mediator.—

He wished, I say, to prove the inferiority of the ritual law.

1. In the mode of its revelation. The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator: how far superior, then, must have been that promise that came direct from GOD Himself! The law was calculated to depress the thoughts to earth by its carnal rites and burdensome observances. How far superior, then, must have been that promise which elevated the thoughts, hopes, affections, at once to the throne and mercy-seat of GOD! The law was intended but to have a typical efficacy by shadowing forth good things to come. How far superior, then, in their fulfilment, must have been those abiding realities, those spiritual substances, which were thus foreshadowed!

And 2, in the person of its mediator.

The mediator of the covenant of the law was MOSES, the servant of GOD: but the Mediator of the covenant of promise was JESUS, the Son of GOD! And that we may duly appreciate the *special*, the *specific*, superiority in this character of the latter over the former, let us consider what was the office of, and what the necessary qualifications for, a mediator.

A mediator is a person who seeks to reconcile differences between conflicting parties: and to do this successfully between man and man, he must be utterly unbiassed by the prejudices of either, while he must feel a sympathy with the affections of both. In the arrangement of human differences, we know by experience that if a person attempts to mediate between two, while all his sympathies are enlisted on the side of one, his office is sure to fail, even if his mediation be not rejected. And therefore when the Apostle says "A mediator is not a mediator of one," he shows at once the inefficiency

of Moses for the office, because being only man, he could not mediate on the side of deity: he could convey God's commands to his people; he could even act out God's will in his own person: but not being a partaker of the Divine Nature he could not mediate as a divine participator in the covenant!

But contrast this with the Mediator of the covenant of promise, and regard the immeasurable superiority! Behold the development of the mystery contained in the concluding words of the text, "but GOD is one!" God, whose unfathomed grace gave forth the PROMISE, found it inconsistent with His Godhead to mediate on the side of man: and hence that great and wondrous mystery, long hid in the bosom of the Creator, was revealed in the person of the Mediator of the new covenant, the incarnation of Deity, the union of the divine and human natures in the person of JESUS CHRIST! While man, as man, was incompetent to mediate on the side of GOD; and while GOD, as GOD, was equally incompetent (consistently with his divine attributes) to mediate on the side of man; NO PERFECT MEDIATOR could exist to reconcile the offended with the offender! But He who had propounded the mystery in his earliest promise to fallen man, and who alone could fulfil it, He gave a justifying power to the faith that should receive the promise of the incarnate Word, even before it comprehended it, and (while the works of the law were insufficient to salvation) "*accounted them righteous that BELIEVED!*"

Thus, brethren beloved in the LORD, I have endeavoured, though perhaps very imperfectly, to explain to you the Apostle's meaning in the text; and I would now in conclusion call for your solemn attention while I address to you a few words on the all important doctrine

of justification by faith, which is so earnestly defended in the Epistle to the Galatians.

The Holy Gospel of our Blessed Saviour lays down most distinctly that comforting doctrine,—a doctrine which at once destroys self-elation and elevates humility,—that is so ably described in the words of the Articles of our Church, “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST by faith, and not for our own works and deservings.” This was as true of the Jewish Church, as is clearly proved by St. Paul, as it is of the Christian; but the difference of our positions calls on our part for the most devout and humble gratitude. While the Jew looked forward to the fulfilment of a dimly defined, mysterious, *promise of a future Saviour*, through faith, in which he could alone be justified, we have to look back amid the clearest evidence of undeniable fact to its most gracious *fulfilment!* Our faith then may be corroborated by an evidence, which was sealed in the deepest obscurity to them! And we have in this an undoubted advantage over our spiritual ancestry of the House of Israel.

But while thus congratulating ourselves on an undeserved, and I trust richly appreciated mercy, it is necessary heedfully to avoid one dangerous error, viz., not to degrade our faith into a *mere effect of external evidences*. The mind being convinced will not always influence the conduct. Holy Scripture tells us that it is “with the *heart* that man believeth unto righteousness,” and unless our hearts be touched with a sense of God’s mercy, bounty, long-suffering, and love,—unless we are bound to Him by the holy sympathy of the indwelling mind which was also in CHRIST JESUS,—unless we recognise in the Incarnation of the Godhead the mysterious truth of a renewed exaltation of our human nature, and in our

constitution into CHRIST a restoration to the forfeited favour of GOD,—unless regenerated into the divine image and constantly renewed in the spirit of our minds by the ever freshly springing graces of the HOLY GHOST!—unless habitually walking in that state of justification whereto by faith we have been admitted, and wherein, under GOD's grace, by faith we are retained; we can neither expect to be called the children of faithful Abraham, nor to receive the inheritance of the everlasting promises of GOD, which have been sealed in the blood of JESUS CHRIST!

May GOD grant to us, beloved brethren, so to be “rooted and built up in Him” unto whom we have been born again, that we may have grace and strength “to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand!” So that when our time of judgment comes the one Mediator between GOD and man may mediate for us, and ensure our enrolment and reception into the full glories of the Church triumphant, where GOD's unfailing promises will be fulfilled.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY AND PRIMITIVE CHURCHMANSHIP.

A SERMON ON THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE

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ACTS II. 41, 42.

*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized :
and the same day there were added unto them about
three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in
the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of
bread, and in prayers.*

OUR attention last Sunday was suitably occupied by the doctrine of the resurrection of CHRIST, so plainly and powerfully proved by St. Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. He concludes his argument with the triumphant appeal, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that GOD hath made that same JESUS, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST." We will now continue the history, as it was read in the second lesson for Easter Day, observing upon the effect produced by the wonderful discourse of St. Peter, and the formation of the Christian Church in consequence. We are told by St. Luke that JESUS CHRIST was amongst his disciples forty days after his resurrection,—in memory of which the faithful have always observed the season of forty days after Easter, now again begun. The main employment of this season by CHRIST was a series of conversations

held with the disciples on things "pertaining to the kingdom of God," *i. e.*, to his Church now about to be established. By his resurrection from the dead, He was made, as the Scripture says, "Head over all things to his Church." He was now going to commit the visible government of that Church to his Apostles, whom He had chosen; and therefore it was necessary for Him to supply them with instructions for the proper execution of their office, having first of all imparted to them divine authority for their ministrations.

A great many things which He said to them upon this subject are not recorded, though sufficient is told to us to enable us to judge of the general tenor of the whole. And when, on reading the Acts of the Apostles, we see how they acted, and upon what principles they established the various Churches of Christendom, we may, without fear of mistake, conclude that they followed carefully the precepts which their Divine Master had delivered to them before He was taken from the midst of them. The doctrine, the form of worship, the government, and the sacraments of the *Christian* Church, were without doubt brought into action by the Apostles after the Divine pattern, just as Moses prepared the tabernacle and ordinances of the *Jewish* Church after the Divine pattern, which was shewed him during forty days' conversation with God in the mount. The sayings, therefore, and the doings of CHRIST, after his resurrection, will have necessarily to be considered, in order to understand the sequel of St. Peter's Sermon and the Acts of the Apostles generally. What, then, did CHRIST say and do? Let us hear the Evangelists. St. Matthew writes, that "JESUS came and spake unto his Disciples, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the

Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*." St. Mark,—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned†.” St. Luke records that CHRIST ordered “repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem‡.” And the Apostles were to tarry at Jerusalem till they should “be endued with power from on high” for this great work. They were to receive the qualifications for their office on the day of Pentecost, though the commission for it they received from CHRIST himself, as St. John relates it in the passage chosen for the Gospel of to-day,—“Then said JESUS to them, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the HOLY GHOST: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained§.”

Here, then, we see how the Blessed Saviour provided for the establishment and perpetual government of his Church. The fountain of all power was GOD the Father Almighty; but He had committed that power to his Son as the head of his Church. In virtue of this authority, JESUS CHRIST sent forth his Apostles as his lawful and accredited ambassadors to lay the foundations of the Church in every nation under heaven. That no man might mistake them for false apostles, they had the

* St. Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

† St. Mark xvi. 15, 16.

‡ St. Luke xxiv. 47.

§ St. John xx. 21—23.

power of working miracles, and the gift of speaking in divers languages, bestowed upon them. They were entrusted with the ministry of the Word both among the Jews and among the heathen, and were to make all such as were converted to the faith members of the Church by the sacrament of baptism; to them were also committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven (as you may see in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel and in the Gospel of to-day*), *i. e.*, the power of absolving men from sins, ministerially, in the Name of God, and the awful alternative if found necessary; especially, they were to provide successors to themselves, in the ordinary exercise of their functions, who were to ordain others in like manner in their stead, with whom CHRIST promised his presence to the end of all time. The successors to the Apostles, from the time of their death, were called Bishops; and with bishops, consequently, has always rested the power of ordaining pastors and ministers in the Church of Christ. It is evident that without these provisions and promises, CHRIST would have left his Church in a worse condition than any society upon earth; for every society has its lawful rules, and governors to execute those rules. Without these provisions and promises, I say, there might have been danger lest a succession of true pastors should fail, or false ones should venture, of their own mind, to assume authority in the Church. But the promise of CHRIST frees us from any such fear; for He vouchsafes his perpetual presence with the bishops of his Church, in the words which He spake to the first of their order,—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Such, then, being the nature of the commission and

* St. John xx. 19—23.

the "commandments" which CHRIST gave, after his resurrection, to "the Apostles whom He had chosen," let us return to the account in the Acts, which shows how they began to execute their commission, and what effect was accordingly produced among their converts. For the second chapter of the Acts is a picture of the earliest Christian Church, in its purest condition, sketched in the Bible not only for our admiration, but for our improvement also. Those primitive disciples are set forth as an example to all members of the Church; and therefore, each of you, my brethren, has the deepest interest in knowing their history, that you may follow their practice.

Many of them had been guilty of crucifying the Lord of Glory; and when they heard the discourse of St. Peter, they were smitten with heartfelt conviction for sin, and manifested their anxiety about their spiritual condition, by the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Mark now the Apostle's instructions: his Master had enjoined him "to preach repentance and remission of sins;" and with this injunction he exactly complies. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST." "Repentance towards God" was their first duty, and a necessary preparation for that sacrament of baptism wherein were to be "visibly sealed unto them the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of their adoption to be the sons of God by the HOLY GHOST." Such was the teaching of the Apostle, and "they that gladly received his word were baptized." Nor was this all; they were also received into the Church, or as St. Luke says, "were added to the Church," being such as were brought into a state of salvation. You will perceive, in passing, how

our service for Public Baptism exactly corresponds with the practice of apostolic times. For that service consists of two parts; firstly, the solemn baptism of the person in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and secondly, the receiving of the person into the congregation of CHRIST's flock, whereupon his sureties satisfy the congregation that he shall be taught to hold a right faith, and to lead a right life. And thus every person baptized must be also "added to the Church;" private baptism is in no case reasonable, except a person be in danger of death. But if a baptized infant die, it is "added to the Church" in the noblest sense, for it is translated at once to the Church triumphant, being undoubtedly saved: if, however, it live, it must be formally received into the Church militant here in earth, and enrolled amongst its members, that being a faithful soldier and servant of CHRIST to its life's end, the perfected saint may at length reign with Him in heaven. It should never be forgotten that the "being added to the Church" is a significant part of the office of baptism, the neglect of which gives occasion to the greatest confusion, and deprives the Sacrament of one of its most important meanings. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." As, however, many of you have openly repented of your negligence in this matter, it is to be hoped such may never occur again among you.

But let us direct particular attention to the conduct of those first Christians after they had been baptized by the Apostles, and received into the Church. It may be observed that we never read of these converts being confirmed afterwards; when the Apostles baptized them, it appears that they received the full gift of the HOLY GHOST, and nothing remained to complete

the baptism afterwards. The case was altogether different when the Samaritan converts had been baptized by the deacon Philip; it was then requisite for Peter and John to go down to them, and by laying on of hands, bestow on them the gift of the HOLY GHOST. For "as yet," says the historian, "He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord JESUS."

The conduct of the first Christians is described by St. Luke with beautiful simplicity. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." When we have awhile examined these several features of character and principles of conduct, in the early Christians, we shall be better able to apply the subject to our own improvement, and discern the path in which we are called on to walk as followers of the blessed saints of apostolic times.

It is plain that after they were baptized, a consistency of character was established in them. "They continued steadfastly." They rightly conceived themselves pledged to a certain course of life, to fixed principles of action, to a known definite creed, and to these they conscientiously clave. To waver in their faith or their practice, to suffer themselves to be tossed to and fro, to look behind them like Lot's wife, was, in their judgment, to be traitors to their Captain, to violate the solemn engagements of their baptism, to be unfaithful to their God. And therefore "they continued steadfastly;" steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine,—steadfastly in the Apostles' fellowship,—steadfastly in breaking of bread,—steadfastly in prayers. We must say a few words on each of these points separately.

First; "the Apostles' doctrine" was, of course, that which the Apostles taught; the sum of which contained

in the Apostles' Creed, is professed in some simple form by every one at his baptism. The Apostles were particularly jealous lest any persons not holding this doctrine should creep into the Church; they warned their converts perpetually against the danger of it, and almost every Epistle contains reference to persons who were endeavouring to shake their steadfastness in the true doctrine. All such they were to shun. "Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*." "As ye have therefore received CHRIST JESUS the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit†." "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of CHRIST, hath not GOD. He that abideth in the doctrine of CHRIST, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed‡." Following these precepts, and warned by these exhortations, the primitive Church "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine."

But, secondly, they "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' fellowship," or communion: *i. e.*, they continued firm members of the Church into which they had been baptized by the Apostles. They did not forget that they had all been "baptized into *one* body." They remained steady attendants on the Apostles' ministry, joined with them in the same worship, partook with them of the same sacraments. As little would they have thought of setting up a pretended church of their

* Gal. i. 8, 9.

† Col. ii. 6, 7, 8.

‡ 2 John 9, 10.

own apart from the Apostles' fellowship, as of worshipping a pretended Christ of their own contrary to the Apostles' doctrine. True, that shortly wicked persons arose to entice them away from the Apostles' fellowship, as others were endeavouring to undermine their belief in the Apostles' doctrine. Against all such attempts to divide and separate them from the Church, the Apostles repeatedly admonished them. "Now I beseech you, brethren, and mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord JESUS CHRIST, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*." "My brethren, be not many masters†, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in the last days perilous times shall come. They will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears‡." "Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time; these be they who separate themselves§." Of such great importance was it to continue steadfastly in the Apostles' fellowship; and the first Christians did so: all that did not were avoided by them, as the Apostles taught them to do.

Thirdly; "They continued steadfastly in breaking of bread." This means the Holy Communion, in which bread was broken and eaten in "remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of CHRIST," and of the benefits received thereby. To use modern language, they were "regular communicants:" but the word *regular* must be

* Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

† Teachers, διδάσκαλοι.

‡ St. James iii. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1; iv. 3, 4,

§ St. Jude 17—19.

used with a strictness that I fear modern habits will not exemplify, and, as some think, imply "day by day;" for so often did the early Christians receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "They continued daily with one accord in the temple," and probably after that service was over, they "broke bread from house to house;" or, they celebrated the Holy Communion in the private houses, the upper rooms where they were wont to assemble for worship. We find constant mention of their meeting together to eat bread, which was the principal purpose of their assemblies*. Indeed, the earliest Liturgies of the Church contain but little more than the Communion Service.

Fourthly; the early Christians "continued steadfastly in prayers." This should be rendered, "in the prayers," *i. e.*, in the public prayers, especially of the temple, and also the peculiar prayers used by the Christians. The Apostles set them a strict example in the attendance on the temple services, at the canonical hours of nine and three o'clock. Thus, "Peter and John went up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." This was a part of every day's occupation, and St. Paul afterwards enjoined them "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together." And we know from other history that they persevered in the Apostle's direction, and continued instant in prayer; and it came to pass, when they could not do it by day, for fear of being seized and imprisoned, that they did it by night.

We have now examined four leading characteristics of those persons who were baptized by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. And those characteristics are, to

* For a fuller exposition of the whole passage, see DR. HAMMOND'S *Practical Catechism*, lib. vi., sect. 4.

speaking summarily, the following: they were, (1) sound Christians, (2) strict Churchmen, (3) regular Communicants, (4) constant Worshipers. Sound Christians, because they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine; and here was the Unity of Faith:—strict Churchmen, because they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' fellowship; and here was the Unity of Government:—regular Communicants, because they continued in breaking of bread; and here was the Unity of Sacraments:—constant Worshipers, because they continued stedfastly in the prayers; and here was the Unity of Worship*.

Such, brethren, was the character of the purest saints that ever lived; and if we would be worthy of a common name with them, and share with them hereafter the blessedness which they now enjoy, we must bear the same character also. We are not indeed to establish a community of goods, for that would now be as undesirable and improper, as then it was necessary and significant†. This was the mere consequence of circumstances: but the essential parts of the character of the early disciples are still essential to ourselves. Here we are not at liberty to pick and choose for ourselves, but must, like the early disciples, be sound Christians, strict Churchmen, regular Communicants, constant Worshipers. And these points of character we may and ought to fulfil as

* The Unity of Spirit is implied in Acts ii. 47, and mentioned in Acts iv. 32. These component parts of the Unity of the Church might easily be re-arranged so as to correspond with those of BISHOP PEARSON *On the Creed*, Art. 9.

† See some sensible remarks on this peculiar feature of "the Primitive Hebrew Christian Church of Jerusalem," by the Rev. J. B. Cartwright, A. M., pp. 35—51, who confirms his strict interpretation (against the laxer one of Mosheim and Dr. Burton) from GRESSWELL *On the Parables*, vol. iii. p. 247, 256.

baptized members of the Church of England, which is a sound branch of the Church of CHRIST.

As to the first, the doctrine which each of us has professed at his baptism to hold is the very substance of what the Apostles taught, and is called the Apostles' Creed. And with our mouths we continue steadfastly in this, the Apostles' doctrine, for we never meet together for worship without making this confession of our faith, each for himself. But it is for us to examine ourselves, how far the profession of the lips is the belief of the heart; and whether we nourish any false doctrine under a fair and orthodox creed: for many have done this. Such have wished to be accounted sound Christians, whilst they were heretical on one or more fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The Athanasian Creed gives us the most solemn warning against such a delusion. "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith."

Secondly. We are bound by the vow of our baptism to continue steadfastly in the Apostles' fellowship, *i. e.* to be strict Churchmen; to continue in the unity or communion of that Church which was built on the foundation of the Apostles. We expressly declare in the Creed, that we believe "one Catholic and Apostolic Church." We thus, with our mouths at least, profess that we cleave to that Church of which we read in the second chapter of the Acts, the Head of which is CHRIST, the founders of which were the Apostles, the rulers of which are their successors the Bishops, the ministers of which are the Priests and Deacons, appointed by the Bishops, the constitution of which is Catholic, to all ages, in all places, for all persons, the faith of which is that once delivered to the Saints, the Sacraments of which are those instituted by CHRIST Himself. Here, then, again, we must

examine ourselves, whether the profession of our lips is the practice of our lives. For many in this country have neglected the practice of the early Christians to "continue steadfastly in the Apostles' fellowship." They have taken the liberty to separate themselves from the one Catholic Church, founded by the Apostles in the beginning, to join distinct societies of their own, founded by divers persons within the last two hundred and fifty years, which the Church has never acknowledged, and to listen to the preaching of those whom the Bishops never authorized to minister in the congregation. And such division has been represented to be not only no sin, but even praiseworthy before God; so that many simple persons, who would yet continue in the one Catholic and Apostolic Church which they profess to believe, have not continued steadfastly therein, as the first Christians did. Brethren, if there be any of you who have been thus shaken in your principles, and undecided in your practice, I willingly believe it has been through ignorance on your part, because you did not see the sin of such conduct. But take heed, lest, while seeking to please yourselves, you displease ALMIGHTY GOD; lest while halting between two opinions, you make shipwreck of your faith; lest, while God has made *one* road to heaven in his Church, you miss your way in trying to find out two. Remember the warning given you in the word of GOD; "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them." You have seen the anger of GOD against all who make divisions by the examples of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram this morning in the first lesson. Beware lest any of you "perish in their gainsaying." You pray in the Litany that the good LORD would deliver you "from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism;" provoke Him not, therefore, by practising or encouraging any of those evils. The first and best Christians whom you are

to follow in the way to heaven neither practised nor encouraged them; for "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship."

Thirdly. Our duty is to be *regular communicants*. I do not say we are bound to follow out to the very letter the practice of daily communion as it existed in the primitive Church, nor will I hazard any remarks upon the privileges and blessedness of such a life in a congregation such as these times generally assemble. But surely no less is required of us, than to embrace gladly and devoutly every opportunity that is given us of receiving "the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of CHRIST." And herein is that divine saying true, that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." In the use of these holy mysteries, pre-eminently, experience will testify, that diligent attendance begets frequency of attendance, and frequency of attendance increase of love, and increase of love more ardent longings after union with Him whom we love, and union begets conformity to his divine image, and conformity to his divine image is the entire absorption of our whole being in an infinity of happiness.

Fourthly. If we have persuaded you thus far, my brethren, we have already engaged you to the fulfilment of the fourth point of primitive practice; viz., that you be *constant worshippers*. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." All caprice, all the vain and trifling excuses which are made by irregular attendants at the house of GOD, are hereby shut out, and exposed in their true character. For if the worship of GOD ALMIGHTY be a duty, it is always a duty; if the service of GOD be perfect freedom, what folly is it ever to for-

sake it for the service of the world and the flesh? Let me observe, in conclusion, that if we “profess and call ourselves Christians” of the Church of England, we must “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and Father of all*.”

May He, who hath “knit together his elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of his Son CHRIST our Lord; grant us grace so to follow his blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which He has prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen†.”

* Eph. iv. 1—6.

† Collect for All Saints’ Day.

THE CHRISTIAN ALTAR REPAIRED.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

REV. JAMES BROGDEN, M.A.,

CURATE OF ST. MICHAEL'S, ST. ALBAN'S.

1 KINGS xviii. 30.

And he repaired the Altar of the Lord that was broken down.

IT is on building altars unto the LORD, that is, on the establishment in every nation, of a religion, built, as St. Paul expresses, upon "the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner stone*," that the welfare of empires and of individuals must mainly depend, under Divine Providence, in all ages of the world. If we were disposed to doubt or hesitate on this subject, a slight regard to the occasion of the words of the text, will afford convincing proof that we must not "halt between two opinions†;" for at this time the "children of Israel had forsaken God's covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his Prophets with the sword; Elijah, even he only remained, and they sought his life to take it away‡." But in the duty of warning a sinful world, and of recalling men to a right knowledge of the true God, though no longer a welcome, he still remained among them, a faithful and a patient messenger; in his word, as is described, burning "like a lamp§," amidst the darkness of national idolatry; and so

* Ephes. ii. 20.

† 1 Kings xix. 10.

† 1 Kings xviii. 21.

§ Eccl. xlviii. 1.

“honoured,” finally, “in his wondrous deeds*,” that the offerings of a sinful people were consumed at his prayer, and became “pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years†.”

The extreme disobedience of the children of Israel had been punished, at this period, in a manner which singularly contrasts with the tenor of God’s covenant, made to Noah, of blessing and fruitfulness upon the earth. The letter of that covenant was *all* that remained; “seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, did not cease‡;” but the *spirit* of God’s promised bounty was withdrawn; the well-springs of the earth’s fertility were closed; the dews of heaven were withheld; during “three years and six months§” it rained not, as a punishment for the neglect of divine worship; “the harvest of the field perished,” the garners were desolate, the corn wasted, “the new wine was dried up, the oil languished,” and “the land mourned||.” So true is it, that when a man ceases to delight in the law of the LORD, he fails also to be “like a tree planted by the water-side, that will bring forth his fruit in due season¶.” Can we, then, in our own age, presume upon the promises of God, and neglect his service? Can we, day after day, and as each succeeding year passes, so vainly imagine that the blessings and benefits of the Gospel will continue to descend from heaven upon us; “that our leaf also shall not wither,” and look forward, that “whatsoever we do, it shall prosper**?” If in our own generation likewise, and in a Christian sense, we continue to forsake God’s covenant, and throw down his

* Eccl. xlviii. 4.

† Malachi iii. 4.

‡ Genesis viii. 22.

§ James v. 17.

|| Joel i. 9, 10, 11, 12, 17.

¶ Psalm i. 3.

** Psalm i.

altars; since this forsaking and throwing down applies not merely to “temples made with hands,” of wood and stone, “graven by art and man’s device*,” but to the Christian character; to *ourselves*, “our souls and bodies;” in regard both to *covenanted obligations* and our *own consciences*. Whenever we are allured from duty, and enticed by sin, is there not then, on our parts, a forsaking of God’s covenant? And whenever we resist, and strive to overpower the gentle whisperings of conscience, which, “in a still small voice†,” follow and reprove, by their salutary admonitions, the disturbing outbreak of all those evil and corrupt affections which assault and hurt the soul, is there no *moral* desecration?—no *altar* of the LORD within us, which is broken down?—no *fear* inspiring us, lest the fertilizing sources of spiritual nourishment should be withheld?—and we be left to languish under want of that blessed *unction* from above, the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness.

Your bodies are “the *temples* of the HOLY GHOST,” says St. Paul, which is in you; “which ye have of GOD; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.” And our Christian responsibility is thus enforced and made the consequence,—“Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s‡.” Are, then, the spiritual temples of *your* bodies devout and holy, like a house of prayer? Are they never disordered by unruly thoughts, disturbed by restless passions, or defiled by sinful lusts? Are you not sometimes, it may be feared, in the selfish pursuits of this world, too like those who bought and sold doves in the Temple, the dedicated

* Acts xvii. 24, 29.

† 1 Kings xix. 12.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

edifice at Jerusalem, incurring that rebuke of their Lord, "My house," it is written, "shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves*." Judge, therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the LORD. Though you may be free from present pain and punishment, do not conclude that you are without sins; for the cause of our peace is oftentimes not our own innocence, but GOD's patience; it is not because our sins hold their tongues, but GOD's judgments hold theirs; notwithstanding our guilt, He is silent†; and one of those judgments, of which we should take particular warning, from the history we are now considering, is this,—that when GOD's spiritual blessings are slighted and unheeded by man, they too are not unfrequently withdrawn. "He gave them," says the Psalmist, "their request; but sent *leanness* into their soul‡."

Ought we not then, seriously, and with humility, to consider, in what way man should endeavour to preserve his integrity against the wiles of the devil; and what appointed means exist, by divine authority, upon which we may each individually depend, for continuing spiritually, throughout all ages of the world, this pious ministration of the prophet Elijah, who "repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down."

Is it not to our holy mother, the Church of England, to whom we ought to look up for help and instruction; wherein among faithful men "the pure word of GOD is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered according to CHRIST's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same§." Where else can we look, so securely, and that through patience and

* Matt. xxi. 13.

† Psalm cvi. 15.

‡ BISHOP LAKE'S *Sermons*.

§ Art. XIX.

comfort derived entirely from Holy Scripture, to have our *faith* established by teaching; our *hope* confirmed by prayer; our *charity* enlarged and promoted by example?

How can we expect to wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," without some light and guidance? may we not faithfully conclude that it is only by attending the public worship of God; joining in appointed ordinances, and "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*," that we may quietly look for support: and as we are never encouraged to trust in our own sufficiency, so we are, on the contrary, expressly taught, that "in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving," we are to let our "requests be made known unto God†."

While we pass, then, through the vicissitudes of each season, and as every year, and our daily experience, attest the eternal truth of God's promise made to Noah, "that while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease‡:" we surely cannot remain insensible to the fact, that these blessings were at first covenanted as the especial reward of a righteous and pure worship of God; and that they are to be sought for, and enjoyed by man, at all times, upon the same plain conditions of his reasonable service, to ascribe "unto the LORD the honour due unto his name," and to "worship the LORD with holy worship§."

I have urged, at present, this striking contrast be-

* Ephesians vi. 12.

† Genesis viii. 22.

† Ephesians vi. 18.

§ Psalm xxix. 2.

tween divine blessing in the case of Noah, and God's contraction of his promises in the time of Elijah, in order that we may all be seriously persuaded of the strict necessity for maintenance, among ourselves, of the pure worship of God, upon those established foundations afforded by our Church, and sanctioned by his holy word. "Noah sat quietly in the ark," says Bishop Hall, "neither feeling nor fearing evil; he knew that no perfume of any offering could be so sweet, as the holy obedience of the faithful;" he knew, too, that "He which owneth the waters would steer him, that He who shut him in would preserve him. How happy a thing is faith! what a heavenly peace doth it work in the soul in the midst of all the inundations of evil."

Elijah, in repairing the inroads of idolatry and disobedience, took twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob, and with them built an altar in the name of the Lord, and offered a material sacrifice: our holy and apostolical Church, repairing *their* fallen nature, now builds up all her *members*, as "*lively stones**, " in *their* "*most holy faith*†:" she exists a "spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by JESUS CHRIST:" and as the fire from heaven came down, at the righteous prayer of Elijah, to consume his material sacrifice, is it too much to hope for the descent of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT to sanctify and bless continually the spiritual ministrations of his holy Church?

How much would her too-neglected ordinances be venerated among men, if all were *taught* to know the riches of such a treasure, and to feel, as has been truly said, how "she seeks to shed her *enlightening*, her *chasten-*

* 1 Pet. ii. 5.

† Jude 20.

ing, her consoling influence on all we do, and all we suffer*.”

She consecrates our infancy by *holy Baptism*: she instructs our childhood, as we increase “in wisdom and stature†,” by her *Catechism*: she *confirms* our youth, by *prayer* to GOD, “that we may continue his for ever, and daily increase in his HOLY SPIRIT more and more, until we come to his everlasting kingdom.” She sanctions the affections of maturer years, by the union of man and wife, according to GOD’s own ordinance, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” “blessing them,” and beseeching GOD, “that they may live together so long in godly love and honesty, that they may see their children Christianly and virtuously brought up to his praise and honour.” And when sickness assails us, it is her office, to pray by the bedside, “that GOD will sanctify his fatherly correction, and that the sense of our weakness may add strength to our faith and seriousness to our repentance.” In the yearly course of public worship, she is *daily* diligent that we may be found of CHRIST, *her Spiritual Head*, in peace, “without spot, and blameless;” we are not only taught, “in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto she hath attained,” but our growth in grace is nourished, in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper: and even in our last hour she would suffer us not, from any pains of death, to fall from GOD, but teaches us to “trust in a glorious resurrection;” and that “there is difference between the spirit of a beast that goeth downwards to the earth, and the spirit of a *man*, which ascendeth up to GOD who gave it.” Our mourners are met and cheered at the entrance of each

* The BISHOP OF EXETER’s *Charge* to his Clergy, October, 1842.

† Luke ii. 52.

churchyard, by scriptural and impressive consolations: "Not to be sorry, as men without hope, for those who sleep in CHRIST," but to know "that our Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; that the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; and that when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; "then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory*." Thus, she wipes away tears from off all faces, giving "beauty" again "for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness†." Thus her hands are spread abroad, to bless and to ordain, to confirm the weak and to reconcile the penitent; "through all the changing scenes of life‡," we may, and we ought to seek, in the ministrations of our own Church, "a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat," "a strength to the needy in his distress, a strength to the poor§," for it is an especial characteristic, that she is the Church of the poor; she sells no indulgences, you cannot purchase any intercessions; her supplications to the throne of mercy are made to GOD alone; "without money and without price||," save that only ransom for man's transgressions, which our Saviour hath purchased with the inestimable price of his incorruptible blood.

Look then upon our Zion, the city of our solemnities, and pray for her prosperity and peace; give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates. "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come¶." "Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell

* *The Book of Common Prayer.* † Isaiah lxi. 3. ‡ Psalm xxxiv.

§ Isaiah xxv. 4. || Isaiah lv. 1. ¶ Proverbs xxxi. 25.

it to the generation following*.” And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.

Let me in conclusion, then, beseech you to be more mindful of those calls to repentance which the Church so continually makes to us. We are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free, and “being born again of water, and of the HOLY SPIRIT,” let us press forward to the prize of our high calling, as members of CHRIST, by setting our affections on things above, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but walking in light and growing in grace, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit in all goodness, and righteousness and truth.

Repentance, whereby we forsake sin; and faith, whereby we steadfastly believe the promises of GOD, made to us in that sacrament, are taught as obligations of holy baptism required of us. How, then, can we reasonably expect to be permitted to see GOD’S glory, if we remain despisers of his power? to enjoy his goodness, if we neglect his covenant, and dispute his wisdom? to obtain his mercy, if we continue to “provoke most justly his wrath and indignation against us?” Rather let us take comfort, “in returning and in rest†.” Let us seek the manifestation of his power and glory, as displayed to us faithfully in the sanctuary of his holy Church, when “knowing the terror of the LORD‡,” she “persuades men” to return “with all contrition and meekness of heart unto the LORD GOD, who is the merciful receiver of all penitent sinners, through the merits of that advocate, JESUS CHRIST, the righteous, who is the

* Psalm xlviii. 13. † Isaiah xxx. 15. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 11.

propitiation for our sins." If we feel "a thankful remembrance of CHRIST's death," let us not at least forget that his Passover is soon to be kept by ourselves; with our loins girded and our lights burning, and with bewailing "acknowledgement" of "manifold sins and wickedness," whose "remembrance is grievous, and whose burden is intolerable." Let us commune with our own hearts, and examine our lives, by the rules of GOD's commandments; for we have spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to make ready: to present ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto GOD.

Let us not, therefore, continue careless, like the foolish loitering virgins, or be cumbered by the cares of the world, with much serving, but let us choose rather "that good part*" of her who teaches us with watchful discipline to "pray for new and contrite hearts," to glorify CHRIST's holy name, by constancy of faith and innocency of life, and to lament over sins in penitence, with humility, as described by the Prophet, "like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth†."

And lastly, my beloved brethren, let us put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as CHRIST forgave us. Let us in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves, if GOD will, peradventure, give them repentance to acknowledge the truth; and let us express at all times that love towards all which "envieth not," "is not puffed up," "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth all

* Luke x. 42.

† Joel i. 8.

things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things* ;” for like “the barrel of meal which wasted not, and the cruise of oil which did not fail†,” this most excellent gift of charity, which “never faileth,” will sustain all those quiet and devout-minded Christians who now cherish spiritually the example of the prophet Elijah, when he “repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down‡.”

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

† 1 Kings xvii. 16.

‡ 1 Kings xviii. 30.

PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE

HON. AND VERY REV. GEORGE PELLEW, D.D.,

DEAN OF NORWICH.

JAMES I. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

IN reflecting, my brethren, upon the state of Christianity as it now subsists, and for some time has subsisted amongst us, we at once become conscious of the prevalence in society of an unsettled state of religious feeling, of an anxious, restless, excited spirit, highly injurious to the sober practice of pure and undefiled religion. In various instances undue attention has been given to questions which tended rather to engender strife than to promote edification. Matters comparatively indifferent have been invested with an imaginary importance, to the neglect of subjects the most essential, and mankind have expended upon empty controversies respecting forms and ceremonials, those energies which might have been far more profitably employed in cultivating the only genuine fruits of devotion, purity of heart and sanctity of conduct.

In attempting to account for the general prevalence of this disposition, it cannot fail to occur to our minds how much less troublesome and difficult, and how much more exciting and agreeable an occupation it is, to dis-

VOL. II.

M

play our talents and knowledge in disquisitions and inquiries, and in framing or attacking theories and systems, than it is to maintain a constant dominion over the natural affections, and to live in perpetual subjection to the restraints of religion. The founders of new sects, the inventors of anything unusual, obtain an immediate notoriety amongst the sons and daughters of Adam. If they do not attract their approbation, they at least excite their astonishment. But they who humbly and earnestly endeavour to set their hearts right before God by the sober practice of scriptural duties, are maintaining an unceasing conflict against the powers of darkness, the difficulties of which no other man can appreciate; and are silently achieving a conquest, the fruits of which will not appear until the day of judgment.

Thus every temporal motive is enlisted in favour of that course which is most seen and admired by men: and hence the importance of those passages of Scripture which represent religion as consisting rather in practice than in display; as a thing of the heart more than of the head,—“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—What sentiments could we find better calculated than these, to recall the enthusiast or speculatist to the simplicity of Christian practice? With what surer test could we try and analyze the novelties on spiritual subjects, which are constantly springing up amongst us?

It is, in truth, the same description of test which the shrewd Gamaliel advised the scribes and Pharisees to apply to the Gospel: if it be of God, ye cannot gainsay it;—if it be not of God, it must perish in its own weakness. Now, that the definition of my text is of God, we cannot doubt, since it was given by his inspiration. It is

a standard, therefore, which will never disappoint us in forming a right judgment on religious subjects; and, however prevalent error and heresy may become, and whatever shapes they may assume, we shall always possess in my text an infallible remedy for their detection. Let us then, with God's permission, consider, in the *first* place, what, according to the definition before us, pure and undefiled religion really is; and then proceed, *secondly*, to try by the standard thus ascertained, the tone of religious feeling now prevalent in the Christian world.

I. *First*, then, by "pure and undefiled," is meant *spiritual* "religion"—religion unstained with earthly defilements: and this holy feeling it is evident the Apostle is here describing, not in its principles, but in its effects. Religion itself—the real sentiment of devotion, consists in love to God, and faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. It can, in fact, be founded on nothing else. But of these the Apostle here makes no special mention, because he regards them as inseparable from religion—as its only basis—its fructifying principle; and hence he presupposes them to be subsisting already in the hearts of Christians. Passing over, therefore, zeal for God, in his definition of religion, as that without which it could not subsist at all, the Apostle proceeds at once to describe it by its chief practical results, namely, charity towards our fellow creatures, and purity of heart and conduct. Here then we learn that true religion is altogether of a practical character; that it consists, *not* in forms and ceremonials—not in controversies and disquisitions—not in gestures and professions calculated to be seen or heard of men,—but in pious thoughts and holy actions; in succouring the distressed, and maintaining our own innocency; in visiting the fatherless and widows in their afflictions; and in keeping ourselves free from the defilements of the

world, "from the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" and all this must be done (though the Apostle considered it too obvious to require mention) from a fixed religious principle—from that pious devoted feeling which impresses the image of God on the soul of man. Nor will our worship of God be pure and undefiled, and therefore pleasing and acceptable, in his sight, unless it leads us, as a necessary consequence, to the fulfilment of the two comprehensive duties of benevolence and self-government. To "do good and to distribute—to love our neighbour as ourselves—not to partake of other men's sins—to keep ourselves pure—to be holy in all manner of conversation, as He who hath called us is holy—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God;" *these* are obligations which the Scriptures represent as alike duties to God, our neighbour, and ourselves*.

And let it not be forgotten that the definition of religion which we are at present considering, includes the utmost sincerity and perseverance of purpose. In the verse which immediately precedes my text, the Apostle has declared of any man, who seeks only to appear religious before men, and who restraineth not his tongue, but permits it to be the tell-tale of his evil thoughts, the volcano, as it were, of his boiling passions, that he "deceiveth his own heart, and that his religion is vain." Hence we may infer, that our sympathy with affliction, and our struggles to overcome the world, and to pass through it without being corrupted by it, must be constant and energetic.

As in the former verse, evil words are regarded as the index of an evil heart, so in this instance, want of

* 1 Tim. vi. 18. Matt. xix. 19. 1 Tim. v. 22. 1 Pet. i. 15. Mic. vi. 8.

perseverance must be considered a proof of infirmity of purpose, and of the absence of a truly Christian motive. It is this *Christian motive*, this desire to please God, to love our neighbour because CHRIST loved him, and to glorify GOD in body and spirit, because we are bought with a price, and are sanctified by the HOLY GHOST, which alone can stamp any value on our feeble endeavours. We know that the quality of the fruit attests the character of the tree; and in the same manner the nature of our charity and self-control reveals the state of our hearts. True religion will show itself by exciting in us a love towards all men; a feeling for their distresses, and an earnest desire to relieve them, founded not only on the precepts of the Gospel, and the example of CHRIST himself, but also on that strong impulse to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow creatures, which the HOLY SPIRIT implants in every Christian breast.

True religion is equally manifested by those who “keep themselves unspotted from the world.” To use the world “as not abusing it*”—to pass through it without being corrupted by it, is a mark of an “honest and good heart.” We must not expect to escape its temptations, or be spared its perils; for that cannot be. It is in the world that our duties and our trials lie; but if we resist its seductions, we may hope, by God’s grace, to overcome them, and to keep ourselves unspotted in the midst of an impure and sinful generation.

Thus simple are the rules by which the Apostle has enabled us to judge, whether or not our religion is pure.

If the faith which we profess has real possession of our hearts, it will fill them with sentiments of compassion and sympathy for the afflicted, and of unbounded philan-

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

thropy for all mankind; urging us by every means in our power to promote their temporal and eternal interests.

Again, the same faith will encourage us to fight a good fight against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to regard all temporal matters chiefly as they bear on things eternal, and, like the Apostle, to count all other things "loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS our Lord*."

Let it not, however, be imagined, that the duties of charity and self-improvement are easy of performance; or that the Apostle, in representing them in my text as the sum and substance of vital religion, has thereby lowered the Gospel standard of faith and practice. The two great branches of duty to our neighbour and ourselves, if carried out upon Christian principles, and in all the fulness and perfection of GOD's holy laws, as illustrated by the example of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and his Apostles, are sufficient to occupy the whole attention of the most devoted Christian throughout the longest life. What a wide circle of Christian graces do they comprehend! What an amount of persevering and conscientious exertion do they demand! Is there a single virtue omitted, which the HOLY SPIRIT, who alone can effect it, ever instils into man's heart? Is there a quality that can adorn the human character? Is there a single act or disposition that we can imagine to be pleasing and acceptable to GOD in CHRIST, which they do not comprehend?

"Visit the fatherless and widows."—*Visit*: that means, inquire diligently for them; search them out; tarry with them as long, return to them as often, as they

* Phil. iii. 8.

may require your aid. And do not *visit* them only; but advise, assist, console, encourage, pray with them; give them whatever you can spare of what GOD has given you; deny them nothing that their eternal interests require.

Equally comprehensive are the words "*fatherless and widows.*" They represent a class of persons suffering under the extreme of affliction. Therefore, since the greater term comprehends the less, this expression may be considered to include every person suffering under tribulation that can be found in the world. Again; the term "keep yourselves unspotted from the world," comprehends in it not only abstinence from every evil thought, word, or deed, prevalent in this sinful state, but also the cultivation of every Christian grace, of which, in the strength and under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, the heart of man is capable. What fortitude then, what perseverance, what disinterestedness, what self-command, what love for GOD and man, what high and noble qualities of the mind must those possess who would rightly fulfil these branches of their duty! And when we consider that the very least of these qualifications are infinitely beyond the reach of man's unaided efforts, that it *must* be the gift of the HOLY GHOST, which will only be granted to earnest and persevering prayer, we shall then perceive how little of his time the Christian can afford to disputations respecting new theories and systems; and how large a portion of it he ought to bestow on the practice of those Gospel virtues and graces, which are at once the marks and fruits of "pure and undefiled religion."

Doubtless it is highly essential that we should be sound and consistent in the faith, once delivered to the saints; and to this end, that we should have carefully

examined and tested our religious principles by Holy Scripture, that so, by having proved all things to our conviction, we may both "convince the gainsayers*," and ourselves "hold fast that which is good." But when this has been conscientiously effected, unless special circumstances should place our faith in danger, it is, I conceive, far better to employ our invaluable moments in working out the great duties of godliness, than to linger unceasingly at the threshold of Christianity, and to dispute for ever about those fundamental doctrines and principles, which, after all, will not avail us, unless we shall have soberly, conscientiously, and perseveringly, reduced them to practice.

II. Having thus seen what pure and undefiled religion before God really is, let us now proceed, *in the second place*, to compare with this standard, the tone of religious feeling now prevalent in the Christian world.

And here a wide distinction is at once observable, between the religion of the Gospel as described in my text, and that restless and excited feeling which the habits of modern times, in too many instances, have substituted for it. The former is practical, the latter theoretical; the former is constantly advancing in holiness, the latter is stationary; the former is personal, that is, looking to the improvement of the party himself, the latter, for the most part, is occupied by the opinions and conduct of other men; the former is the calm and gentle handmaid of Christian duties and Christian peace, but the latter, hurried into excess by party zeal, is often the source of agitation and disquiet.

In short, pure and undefiled religion, and that fervid zeal *not* according to knowledge, which the world fre-

* Tit. i. 9.

quently mistakes for it, are in many respects opposed to each other. One is all obedience to God—the other is all profession before men: one is desirous to withdraw from observation, and finds pleasure in meditation and retirement—the other courts publicity, and seems almost to prefer the “praise of men to the praise of God.” But we need not pursue this contrast further, since St. James, in the third chapter of his General Epistle, has pointed out the distinction between the two, in a manner not to be easily mistaken: “The wisdom that is from above,” he says, “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of *mercy and good fruits*, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace; *but*,” he adds, “the wisdom which descendeth *not* from above, is earthly; for where envying and strife is, there is *confusion and every evil work**.”

From such characteristics, then, must we learn to distinguish between the false glare of worldly religion, and that spiritual devotion which the Gospel inculcates. They show that true piety is averse to extremes; that it preserves a middle course, alike removed from indifference and excitement; that it selects the old and beaten paths; that it prefers action to discussion, and delights in nothing so much, as in quietly seeking to do good after the example of CHRIST. Here, therefore, we possess a test, by which we may “try the spirits, whether they be of God.”

And when we see, on one hand, persons passing usefully through life, refraining from all display, yet actively intent on the duties of religion, and anxious only to grow in grace, to promote the spiritual and temporal interests

* James iii. 17, 18.

of their fellow creatures, and to maintain a conscience void of offence: whilst, on the other hand, we find parties making many professions, declaiming loudly against all who differ from them, attaching much importance to things of small moment, yet bestowing little attention on the far weightier matters of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and manifesting no proofs of their progress in the ways of godliness; under such circumstances it is easy to see which character deserves the preference; and we naturally approve of, and select the tree, which produces the best fruit: and should we observe a party spirit springing up around us in the religious world, and should we be asked by the followers of Paul, of Cephas, or of Apollos, to attach ourselves to them, and to engage in their pursuits or contentions, our answer is plain,— *We belong solely to God in CHRIST, and we know that He delights to see Christians love one another; for He is a God of peace, who must be served and worshipped in the secret heart, and who cannot be glorified by outward violence and confusion. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this:—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

Let it not be imagined; that these remarks are directed against any particular persons, errors, or opinions. They are altogether of a general nature, and my only object in making them is, to endeavour to restrain that tendency towards excitement and novelty on sacred subjects, which keeps the mind for ever wandering in the mazes of general undefined notions wholly disconnected from improvement; instead of supplying mankind with fixed and practical views of religion, tending to bind each individual to the sober, devout performance of his Christian duties.

To conclude then,—we may learn from the foregoing comparison how essential it is to our eternal interests, that our faith and practice should be founded on just grounds of Christian assurance, and the firm basis of Gospel principles. “Strait is the gate” that leadeth to eternal life, and few there be that find it, because mankind so rarely seek for it in the right manner. They expend their zeal in promoting something unusual, in arduous undertakings, or supposed improvements, and forget that true religion consists, after all, in treading well the frequented paths of life; in supporting the trials, resisting the temptations, and fulfilling the duties which surround us on every side in our daily passage towards eternity. He who acts under excitement, or in any position where attention is particularly attracted to his conduct, may be roused by circumstances to make unusual efforts, and yet fall short, after all, of that perseverance in well-doing, which is essential to a life of godliness. It is in the sameness of duty following duty in a succession apparently endless, in the quiet habitude of daily and hourly self-denial, and in the continual preference of God’s will to our own, that the real difficulties of our Christian warfare consist; and it is owing, I believe, to the irksomeness of this dull routine that men sometimes resort to excitement in order to avoid it; they plunge into the storm to escape the calm.

If, my brethren, we have not yet seriously reflected on these subjects, let us awake and change our ways: we must no longer deceive ourselves with mere outward forms. Religion is nothing if it does not prepare us for heaven, and that it cannot do, unless it be “pure and undefiled before God and the Father,” and unless we show that we are influenced by it, by “visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction,

and by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world." Let us then gird up our loins for the great work of preparing for the heavenly life, whilst some portion of the day yet remains to us. We all have much preparation to make before the night shall come upon us. Some, it is to be feared, even in this Christian land, have not yet advanced a single step in the way of salvation, but live in all respects as if there were no God in the world. Others acknowledge the Deity, indeed, as the general Creator and Preserver of all things, but they know Him not as their own reconciled Father in CHRIST JESUS, and so little do they desire or seek his forgiveness, that they have still to learn how even to forgive one another. Some, again, have heard of CHRIST generally as a Saviour, but have never yet sought or received Him as their own special Redeemer; have never yet drawn near unto Him with those offerings of pure and undefiled religion which alone He will accept, namely, lively faith, earnest prayer, and timely repentance. To these, to us, to all who feel their unworthiness, and sincerely desire to repair it, the offer of salvation through CHRIST is freely and without exception made. "The Lord is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance*." "Come unto me," saith the gracious invitation, "come unto me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. I am the living bread which came down from heaven;" draw near unto me, "and you shall eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God†."

* 2 Pet. iii. 9.

† Matt. xi. 28. Rev. ii. 7.

THE JUDGMENT OF MAN AND THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

AN ASSIZE SERMON.

BY THE

REV. S. R. MAITLAND,

LIBRARIAN TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

1 SAMUEL II. 25.

*If one man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him ;
but if a man sin against the Lord who shall entreat for
him ?*

IF there be any such thing as natural religion, it is obvious that it must leave man in great uncertainty as to his duties in this life. Coming, as he does, into a world already framed, and bringing with him a thousand relationships to things already established, even if we suppose him to acquire from natural religion some vague knowledge of a God, of his own dependence upon Him, and his accountableness to Him, it must be a matter of anxious question, how far those circumstances which surround him are directed or approved by his Maker.

He comes unconsciously into existence, and finds himself as he grows up into consciousness involved in a variety of relations and connexions from which he cannot free himself. He is one of the rich or of the poor, one of the rulers or the subjects, a son, a neighbour, perhaps a brother, a master, a servant, a husband, a father. He is called upon to take his place, and act his part in a society already organized, and to submit himself to laws, customs, and habits already established.

If then, I say, he comes to know and consider himself as an immortal creature of GOD, accountable to Him, it must be a matter not only of curious inquiry, but of deep anxiety, how far the machinery of society is approved by Him; and it is striking to observe how completely the Revelation which God has given to us is adapted to meet this question. Thus, as to what respects our present subject, *the offences committed by men* whether against GOD or man. These two classes of offences are indeed, strictly speaking, but one; for all sins against man are sins against GOD. But there is a difference which warrants our considering them distinctly; and on this occasion I would call your attention to the doctrine of our text as it respects these two classes of sins.

I. I would call your attention to the doctrine of our text as it respects the offences of men against their fellow men, "If one man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him."

The Bible is not merely such a Revelation of the Deity as might give to man some faint idea (and more he could not receive) of the nature and attributes of GOD. It is not merely such a communication as may enable him in some degree to understand the relation in which he stands to his Maker, and as may direct him on those points connected with his immediate duty to Him. It is not a mere digest of abstract principles; but it recognizes the world of mankind as it is, man in his various relations, employments, and circumstances, society in its conventional forms, and in all its civil and domestic institutions,—in a word it speaks to his common sense respecting obvious facts.

It tells him, not only that these things are recognized by the great Creator, but that they are ordained by his

will, exist by his power, and are regulated by his providence. Much of it is given to us in the form of a history, not merely that we may know that such things have been, but that we may understand them to be of divine appointment,—that we may learn that it is as much a part of the divine purpose that societies should be formed, and should progressively attain various degrees of civilization, as it is that the grains of corn should spring up and vegetate, through all the several stages, from the green blade to the ripened ear. It gives us a history of man not covered by that veil which generally conceals the workings of God's providence, and shows us that all which we might call the human machinery of society,—the institutions of man, framed apparently by him to meet the exigencies of his circumstances,—are in fact recognized by God as a part of that creation which He has made, and of those means by which He is pleased to work.

Yet farther,—as if to remove all doubt on the subject, the Scriptures reveal to us God manifest in the flesh. They set Him forth as man in familiar intercourse with men, subject to, and conversant with, the institutions of society.

These institutions, then, being a part of the divine purpose, a part in which man most reluctantly acquiesces, a part with which he daily and hourly comes in contact, the Scriptures are peculiarly plain and explicit upon the subject. Thus he who is the wisdom of God speaks, “By me kings reign and princes decree justice, by me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth*,” —and this not merely as a thing permitted, but as one appointed. “There is no power,” says

* Prov. viii. 15.

the Apostle, "but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." We are not here told that authorities thus or thus constituted, or powers in this or that way exercised, are entitled to our obedience; but simply and plainly that the "powers that be,"—were it stated otherwise, nine-tenths of the world could never comprehend the command, or know whether they were obeying it,—such powers as we find when we come unconsciously into connexion with them,—“are ordained of God.” And the inference which the Apostle draws inevitably follows, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” He who resists may plead that in his judgment the power was unjustly obtained or improperly exercised; but I find no allowance of this plea,—no allusion to it,—in the Scripture. The doctrine of St. Paul is as I have stated; and that of St. Peter is, “Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the LORD’s sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.” You see the general terms in which he speaks, “every ordinance;” and not less general are the terms in which St. Paul directed Titus to preach this doctrine: “Put them in mind,” he says, “to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates.”

The ground also on which this submission is to be rendered, is as clearly stated. Man finds, indeed, that some subordination is necessary to the existence of society, and the very exigency of his circumstances requires it. He finds practically (whatever he may talk of original equality) that some must be governed by others, many by a few. But the Scripture puts the

matter on a higher ground, and one which altogether excludes man's ideas of expediency. In the words already quoted he is called upon to submit, "for the LORD's sake;" and again he is told, "Ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." "I counsel thee," says the Scripture, "to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of GOD."

He is therefore required to submit to an ordinance of GOD,—as to the law of the Almighty Sovereign to whom he cannot deny that all allegiance, all obedience, is due, though it be administered, and perhaps imperfectly or unwisely administered, by his fellow men. "They are," says the Apostle, "GOD's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing;" and, having declared that this power is ordained of GOD, he goes on to argue, "Who-soever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

I offer these remarks because they seem to me to refer to a very essential part of Christianity, and a part which requires to be peculiarly impressed on the minds of those who are assembled on an occasion like the present—who are come together to witness the homage of our laws to the law of GOD. I thank GOD that, though perhaps progressively losing that character, England is still a Christian country—her King still acknowledges that it is by the grace of GOD that he is what he is—her judges still bow before the altar of GOD—her magistrates, her jurors, her witnesses are still sworn upon the Gospel of CHRIST—these considerations are not improper for those who have come to be present while he who is appointed to judge others, appears in the presence of Him who is the great Judge of all, and

publicly recognises Him as the author and source of his authority.

For let me remind you, my brethren, that this doctrine involves the duty of many beside those who are called to the highest offices of judicature. The whole system of God's providence is one of subordination; and the whole frame of society is built on that foundation; and I need scarcely say, that it is your duty, by the constant exercise of that authority which God has placed in your hands, to prevent as much as possible the necessity of having recourse to those laws which are required for the punishment of offenders.

Let me remind you of this duty; and if any apology be needful, it is but too obviously furnished by the present state of our country. Some of you are in a more direct and official sense constituted judges, as forming a part of that magistracy which is the peculiarity and the pride of our constitution. Others though not nominally, yet as truly in the sight of God, bear that office in their more limited spheres, as parents, guardians, or masters, or as filling any of those stations (domestic, municipal, parochial, or whatever else,) which give you influence over your fellow men. Let me hope that you are alive to your responsibility; that you look upon the power thus providentially confided to you, as a trust placed in your hands by God, for the performance of which you are accountable to Him; that you endeavour to fulfil it by your example, your precepts, your property, your influence.

What must ever, from its nature, be a sacred duty, becomes in times like these a duty most urgent, and I would hope, that, while you acknowledge the value of those laws, which as on this occasion you see enforced, you still feel that they are inadequate for the purpose of

effectually restraining crime, unless they are seconded by you in your various spheres. The land is not to be kept clear of weeds by going through it once or twice in the year, and cutting down those which have attained a rank luxuriance, and which have perhaps already disseminated their poison. If it is done at all, it must be done by the patient and persevering labour of each one in that portion of the field which, by the appointment of the great Husbandman, he occupies.

I would earnestly desire to impress this upon you; and perhaps it will appear more clear and more important if we attend to a very plain inference from our text; an inference which sets in a strong light that difference which we stated to exist between the two classes of offences of which man is guilty—namely, sins against God, and sins against his fellow men. Observe the view which our text, and those parts of Scripture which we have quoted, give of the nature of man. We hear much in human systems of the dignity of human nature, and the moral excellence of man; but you will hear nothing like this from the Word of God. It always speaks to man as one that is, and that knows he is, a sinner. There is no hesitation, no false delicacy, about the matter. It is assumed as that which is unquestionable. He who made him knows that he is conscious of his sinful nature, and gives him this revelation because he is a sinner. What is the very nature of that Revelation?

It is a revelation of mercy; a declaration of the willingness of God to pardon sin. Its great object is to tell man that God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should never perish, but have everlasting life; to tell him that the Lamb of God hath taken away the sins of

the world by his atoning sacrifice of Himself, once offered, and that He ever lives to make intercession for the sinner who believes in Him, and flies to Him for refuge from that wrath of God which is declared against the ungodly, and which his own conscience tells him that he deserves.

It is a revelation of mercy, and free grace, and love, telling the penitent sinner that while he was yet an enemy, CHRIST died for him, offering him a free pardon through that atonement, recognizing him as what he indeed feels himself to be, a helpless sinner—one who knows that he has broken the laws of GOD, and who feels that with his best endeavours it would be impossible for him to meet the necessary demands of infinite holiness—one who is convicted by his own conscience, and feels the burden of sin, and the dread of punishment—that recognizes him, I say, in this character, and reveals to him the mercy which he needs—shews him that, sinful as he is, he is an object of the Divine compassion and love—tells him, that He who sees, and is justly offended with his sins, is not willing that he should perish, and has provided a ransom for him—conveys to him the life-giving message of his Maker, “Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help found”—reveals to him the blessed mystery of infinite, though slighted, love condescending to expostulate, “Come now and let us reason together—though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

It is a revelation of MERCY. This is its peculiar character. But you will observe that such is the nature of man, that when it comes to speak of his offences against his fellow creatures, it must forego its character of mercy—“If one man sin against another, the judge

shall judge him." There is no alternative. Man cannot extend to his fellow men that free mercy which he requires from his Maker. This we know not merely as a doctrine of Scripture, but by experience. Such is the nature of man that he could not live in society, except under the strong restraint of laws, enforced by the actual punishment of offenders. Mercy, when it is shown, can only be the exception. It can be nothing more than the occasional relaxation of those laws; for, should it go beyond this, it must render those laws nugatory. No, the Scripture declares, history shows, human nature feels, that if one man sin against another, the judge must judge him.

While then philosophers, or those who call themselves so, talk of the dignity and moral excellence of human nature, while controversialists are discussing how much is meant by our Church when she declares that man is "very far gone from original righteousness"—let us rather, my brethren, take the testimony of Scripture, of history, and of our own senses, to the depravity and corruption of man's nature. If it be asked how far he is gone from original righteousness, without affecting subtle distinctions, let us speak from what we see; and let us answer, So far gone, that every society of men has been forced to frame and execute a system of law to restrain him from the commission of those crimes which all men agree in condemning—so far gone, that every society must entrench itself within the bulwarks of penal laws, live as it were in a state of siege, and give up a great part of its natural rights to gain comparative security—so far gone, as that a great part of the revenue of every nation is consumed in protecting its members from guilty aggression—so far, that even in our own country,—the most civilized and Christian in the world,

the country distinguished above all others for the pains and cost employed in the education of its inhabitants, and the maintenance of true religion,—distinguished by a code of laws, wisely framed and regularly and righteously executed—by a magistracy enlightened, upright, and vigilant—in short, by a corrective power forming the sole employment of thousands,—so far gone, that these are all too little, I do not say to prevent crime, but to prevent its steady, rapid, and fearful increase.

Let us acknowledge that these facts, which are in perfect accordance with the testimony of Scripture, and which, even independent of that testimony, would be sufficient, bear but too strong a witness to the corruption and depravity of human nature; and with this admission let us proceed to the second point which we proposed;—

II. To offer some observations on the doctrine of our text respecting the second class of offences,—and this after what has been said we may do very briefly. “If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the LORD who shall entreat for him?”

The first class of offences is easily disposed of. If one man sin against another, man may be his judge. Perhaps reparation may be made, an equivalent may be paid for the loss, or a compensation made for the injury. If, as in many cases, this be impossible, an adequate punishment may be awarded, and by suffering it a man may, as far as regards society, expiate his crime,—but if a man sin against the LORD who shall entreat for him?

This is a case in which he cannot offer reparation,—to say nothing of the greatness of the crime in itself as involving treason against his lawful sovereign, rebellion

against his master, disobedience to his father,—to say nothing of the presumptuous nature of the sin from the infinite distance between the parties. How, then, is the transgressor to atone for it? He may well ask in the words of the Prophet,—and the history of heathenism shews it to be a question which conscience, as soon as it has gained the faintest light, has commonly suggested to man writhing under the load of guilt,—he may ask, I say, in the words of the Prophet, “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

Looking only to the law which he has broken, and to the justice of GOD against whom he has sinned, he must needs be at a loss for an offering. If one man sin against another, he may, as I have said, make reparation or offer compensation; or if he can do neither, he may address him whom he has injured as one who may some day himself need the forgiveness of his brother,—but if a man sin against the LORD who shall entreat for him?

A most important question, my brethren, in a world where there is no man who doubts or ventures to deny that he is a sinner. The conviction of sin is written on every man's conscience; and, wherever he may place the standard of what he ought to be, he is constrained to confess that he does not come up to it. If he thinks that others place it too high, and call on him to be righteous overmuch, let him say what he thinks is required of him, and consider whether he is what, according to his own account, he ought to be.

It is a most important question,—and it is put in a form which almost implies that answer which is given by the whole tenor of Scripture,—“Who shall entreat for him?” It must be an appeal to pure mercy—his language must be, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” It is in vain (and he who knows himself feels it is in vain) to talk of defence or extenuation. His appeal must be to the free grace of his Sovereign, and who shall entreat for him?

As I have said, the Scriptures are a revelation of such mercy to every sincere and faithful penitent—it is their object to tell him that if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous,—one whom the Father always heareth, and for whose sake He is willing and ready to pardon those who are unworthy for their own sakes. It is the object of the Scriptures to set Him forth as the great atonement,—as the LAMB of GOD that taketh away the sin of the world,—as the one Mediator between GOD and man,—as one who was “made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to GOD, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*.” He then in his mediatorial office and on the ground of his atonement and merits, may and does entreat for man. Even before He left the world He entered on that part of his office, and began the work of intercession. “I pray for them,” said He of his disciples, whom He was commending to the care of his Heavenly Father; “keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given me.” Nor was it for them only. He may, He does, He did then begin to intercede for us and

* Heb. ii. 17.

our children, when He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word."

Here He exercised in its full extent his office of Mediator between GOD and man; his office of Advocate with the Father; an office personal and peculiar to himself and exercised by others only through Him. For although it arises directly from his atonement and satisfaction, although He ever liveth to make intercession, yet He is not bodily present in his Church, but governs it by his HOLY SPIRIT. And therefore we may add that,—

The HOLY SPIRIT of GOD is one that may entreat for us. The "SPIRIT helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the SPIRIT itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the SPIRIT, because He maketh intercession for the Saints according to the will of God." If then a man sin against the LORD, these may entreat for him; even our Lord JESUS CHRIST and the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD. And, in and by them,—

He may entreat for himself. Through CHRIST we have, according to the Apostle, "access by one SPIRIT unto the Father;" and that Heavenly Father has revealed himself as one hearing and answering prayer. "Thus saith the LORD, Call upon Me and I will answer thee." These are his words; this is the spirit of his whole revelation to man, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, that He is more ready to hear than they are to pray. And we may yet again add,—

His fellow sinners may entreat for him. And while on the one hand I dare not limit the mercy of GOD, or pretend to estimate the efficacy of faithful prayer to

Him, so as to say, how far a man may be benefitted by the prayers of others, who does not pray for himself, yet I would caution every one against resting on any such ground of hope. To seek the prayers of others is a duty, and so it is to pray for them. "I exhort, therefore," says the Apostle, "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Let us, therefore, my brethren, as specially bound on such an occasion, pray for our Sovereign Lord the King, that he may be kept and strengthened in the true worshipping of God, that under him we may be godly and quietly governed;—for him who in the King's name and by his commission bears now among you the sword of the law, as well as for all the other magistrates assembled to meet him, that God would give them grace to execute justice and maintain truth;—for all who shall be engaged in the business of these Assizes, either on their own behalf or for others, that they may lay aside all hatred and malice, all wrath and clamour and evil speaking, and "that no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter; because that the LORD is the avenger of all such;"—for all jurors, that they may constantly bear in mind the greatness of the trust reposed in them, and take heed that the lives, or properties, or characters of their fellow men are not perilled by neglect, or fear, or favour, or any private affection;—for all witnesses, that no temptation may induce them to break the solemn oath which they have taken in the name and on the Gospel of Him to whom all hearts are open and all secrets are known, or cause them to say more or less than the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;—for all pri-

soners and captives, that it may please God to show his pity upon them, setting free the innocent through the manifestation of truth, and by the pitifulness of his great mercy loosing the guilty from the chains of those sins wherewith they are tied and bound;—and, further, all and each of us, for all and each other, that it may please God to give us an heart to love and dread Him, and diligently to live after his commandments.

PREPARATION FOR THE LIFE TO COME*.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

BY THE

REV. JAMES CHALLIS, M.A.,

RECTOR OF PAPWORTH ST. EVERARD, AND PLUMIAN PROFESSOR OF
ASTRONOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

ROMANS XIII. 12.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

THE collect appointed to be read on this, the first Sunday in Advent, is taken in part from this passage of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The object of the Collect is to turn our thoughts to such subjects of contemplation as may profitably come before the consideration of our Saviour's nativity, and for this reason it is ordered to be read every Sunday during the season of Advent. It will therefore be acting in conformity with the intentions of the compilers of our Liturgy, to explain to you on this Sunday the meaning of those words of Scripture which form a part of the collect of the day, as in so doing the purport of it may be made to appear more clearly, and the great importance of the prayer it contains may be better understood.

Not only in this collect, but in most of the collects, epistles, and gospels of this season, our Church directs our attention to the coming of CHRIST, and not to his

* A Sermon preached in 1835, in the Parish Church of Papworth St. Everard, in Cambridgeshire.

first coming only, but in a particular manner to that which is called his "second appearing." This is done with good reason; because the two comings of CHRIST are connected with each other, both in regard to the Lord himself, and in regard to us. JESUS CHRIST, you know, has already appeared once in the world, to take away sin and open the way to the life immortal. The Scriptures, in very many places, speak of his coming again to judge both the living and the dead, to make a separation between the wicked and the righteous, and to give to all according to their works. At his first coming He was engaged in performing his Father's will,—in teaching righteousness by word and manifesting it in act; at his second appearing He comes to judge the world in righteousness. When He was a preacher of righteousness He said, "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." When He first visited us, He came in great humility: when He shall come again, it will be in glorious majesty. He came once to conquer death: He will come again to give his chosen the life which by his death He purchased. Whilst He lived amongst us, He was despised and rejected by many; then *all* will fear Him. He was oppressed by the rulers of this world, and crucified, although He was the Lord of glory: but in that day, it is prophesied that "they shall shut their mouths at Him" in wonder and astonishment, "for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." While He lived on earth, "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon

Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: *wherefore* GOD also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST is Lord, to the glory of GOD the Father."

Also, as was before observed, the first and second comings of our Lord are connected with each other in regard to ourselves. We are *now* assured that CHRIST will hereafter appear to judge mankind,—to give rewards to the good, and punish the wicked; and what can so strongly furnish a reason, as the knowledge beforehand of this great event, for seeking to do the will of GOD, and striving to imitate the example of righteousness which was set by the future Judge in his first appearance among men, especially as He is now ever ready to enable us by his grace and his SPIRIT to do so? To believe that CHRIST *will* come in his kingdom, is to believe the Gospel—the good news of that kingdom. To be assured and to feel that He *has* come to renew us by his grace and sanctify us by his Spirit, is to be in a state of preparation for his kingdom. The minister of the Word can present to his hearers no stronger inducement to holiness of life, than by telling of the Gospel of the future kingdom of CHRIST, for "it is the power of GOD unto salvation:" and he can give them no better instructions respecting the way to that happy and heavenly state, than by pointing to the life that CHRIST led on earth as an introduction to *his own* glory, and by directing them to rely on his grace, and ask for his Spirit to prepare them for inheriting glory with Him.

The connection between the first and second comings of CHRIST will also appear by considering more particularly the words of the text. And let us endeavour to do this in the spirit of the prayer contained in the collect, asking ALMIGHTY GOD to “give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which JESUS CHRIST came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day when He shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal.”

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” What are we to understand by “the night,” and what by “the day,” in this sentence? “The night” is the time of this mortal life, in which CHRIST came to visit the race of men; a time abounding with sin and ignorance, disease and death. Sin is now spreading a veil of ignorance over the minds of men, and therefore the present is compared to night—the season of natural darkness. Hence it is said of CHRIST, in the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, that He was “a light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” And again, in the third chapter of the same Gospel, at the nineteenth verse, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” We may thus see that the time of this present life is called “night,” on account of the darkness that hangs over the understandings of men through their evil deeds.

But as natural day follows night, so a time of light is to come after the existing darkness. When the night is spent, the day begins. The end of this world is the

beginning of that which is to come. And light will then break forth, because, as it is said, "the Sun of righteousness arises" at the dawn of that day. There are many reasons why that season is called "day," but the principal is, that CHRIST will then appear, and where He is, there is light. When He lived on earth, He gave light in an humble yet effectual manner, by instruction, by wisdom, by truth and holiness: and the lamp that was then lighted has continued to shine to this day. But when He shall appear again, his light will be different and far brighter. He will be seen by all, even by those afar off, appearing in the greatness of his power, and in the glory of his attending angels. *

The time of CHRIST's appearing is also called "day," because it is the time of salvation,—the day in which those who have been called out of darkness will be put into a state of perfect safety. St. Paul says, in the verse preceding the text, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." And St. Peter speaks of "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Both these Apostles looked forward to a salvation hereafter to be revealed; and the words of St. Peter show that it was expected "in the last time," that is, in other words, at the end of this world. In accordance with this view are the words of our Lord, in St. Luke, "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*." The redemption here spoken of is nothing different from the salvation which the Apostles looked forward to, and we thus learn that

* Luke xxi. 27.

our LORD encourages his faithful followers to look for their salvation at a time when they will be witnesses of his coming in glory. We are justified in concluding from the words of Scripture, that CHRIST, at his second appearing, calls the faithful whom He knows and loves, into his presence to be partakers of salvation and immortal life. To *them* this time may well be called day rather than night, because they are then transferred from a world in which they often wandered in error and stumbled for want of knowledge, to a land of safety, where, being enlightened and guided by the source of all spiritual light and knowledge, their way will be clear and their footsteps sure.

There is still another reason why the time of CHRIST's second coming should be called "the day," in opposition to "the night," which is given at the end of the Epistle for the Third Sunday in Advent: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the LORD come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God." The secrets of all hearts will then be revealed. "Every man's work," as St. Paul writes, "shall be made manifest: for *the day* shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Our Lord is referring to the wonderful events of that period, where He says, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Certainly then this must be a time of much light, because, as St. Paul says, "Whatever doth make manifest is light." We are igno-

rant of the means by which GOD will reveal all hidden things, and judge every man according to his works: it is a part of his doings which passes the bounds of our comprehension. Yet we have good reason to believe that there is nothing to prevent the accomplishment of his word,—that what He speaks He is able to perform,—and that in his own time He will bring this great work to pass. It is not of so much importance for us to know by what means the future trial of mankind will be conducted, as to be acquainted with the nature and end of it. It much concerns us to be fully persuaded in our minds that the judgment will be just, that it will embrace all men and all their deeds, and that in the final award, a great difference will be made between the righteous and the wicked. And the foreknowledge of these truths should lead us to make continual preparation for the day of our trial.

Let us now turn our attention to the kind of preparation suggested by the words of the text. It consists in “casting off the works of darkness,” and “putting on the armour of light.” The nature of the deeds corresponds to the time in which they are performed. “They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night.” Since, therefore, we know that the present period of darkness is to be succeeded by a time of light, we ought to feel persuaded that the works that answer to this time should be cast off, and in their stead works of love and holiness, that will bear the light, be taken up. The Apostle explains what he means by “works of darkness,” in the next verse, where he says, “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” It would be easy to make a much longer catalogue than this of deeds that

will not bear the light of truth and judgment. How many and how various are the crimes that are every day committed around us! How often do our own consciences reprove us for sinning against our Maker or our neighbour! Some sins, it may be, are committed openly and in broad day, because they are approved of, or at least not condemned, by a wicked world. But these, though they may accord with the maxims of the world, are transgressions of the law of God, and will not stand the scrutiny of the coming Judge. All wickedness, whether it be such as the world would condemn, or such as is not discountenanced by the generality of mankind, will subject the offenders to shame and confusion of face, when tried by the standard of God's holy law. It is therefore of great consequence to listen to any reason which may induce us to act according to the Apostle's exhortation and cast off the deeds of the present time. Let us attend a little more closely to his words. He says, "Let us *therefore* cast off the works of darkness," and consequently refers to some strong reason for doing so. That reason is, "The day is at hand,"—the day of trial I have been mentioning. The Scriptures invariably speak of it as a day which is not far from any of us.

Not only are we told, that "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, to receive the things done in the body, whether they have been good or evil,"—we are told also, that the day of judgment is near to all of us, and that the Judge will "come quickly." This truth, listened to and believed in the heart, will furnish a constant inducement to forsake sin and lead a new life. And if you feel that your deeds will not bear the light, nor the examination of the coming Judge, and you are desirous of removing them

far from you,—of forsaking sins that you served and pleasures that you loved,—remember that the grace of CHRIST is sufficient for these things. To the believing and humble suppliants, He gives strength to fight against the enemies of their peace. And God, through his mercy in CHRIST JESUS, will remove far off their transgressions, and cast them into the depths of the sea.

St. Paul exhorts not only to cast off “the works of darkness,” but to put on also “the armour of light.” And he explains what is meant by this expression when he says in the next verse but one, “Put ye on the Lord JESUS CHRIST:” that is, strive to be as He was when He was in the world, walk in his spirit, follow his footsteps, in meekness, in patience, in love, forbearing one another, not envying one another, not returning evil for evil, but on the contrary good for evil. They who do such things walk in light, as they who do the contrary walk in darkness. Let it not therefore be said of any of us that we are children of darkness, but rather children of the light; and let us not serve the Prince of darkness, but rather be obedient to CHRIST, the Prince of light and life; let us walk “as children of light,” showing forth “the fruits of the SPIRIT,” “in all goodness and righteousness and truth:” and let us attend to the exhortation of St. Paul, “to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice: and to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for CHRIST’s sake has forgiven us.” This is to be clad with the armour of light,—to put on the breastplate of righteousness. The life of a Christian is often in the Scriptures compared to a warfare: he has enemies to contend with, and he is also furnished with weapons of defence. As armour is a protection and defence in the day of battle, so knowledge of the word of God, belief

of the truth and of the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, faith in the divine promises, and the hope of salvation, are the means of guarding against the attacks of spiritual enemies. He who is furnished with these is under a safeguard: his life is secure: because he has that which can resist all the powers of sin, Satan, and the world. With no other weapons the Apostle Paul had contended, when at the end of his career he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Let the experience of this holy man be our pattern and encouragement.

The subject we have been considering ought principally to lead us to prayer and watchfulness. "The Son of Man cometh at an hour that we think not of." "Watch, for ye know not the hour," is the express command of CHRIST. Put on the armour, and be ready for the battle. Be engaged in nothing of which you are ashamed now, or may have reason to be ashamed at the day of CHRIST's appearing. For it is no light thing to consider that the same Lord and Master who has distributed to all their talents according to their several ability, will surely return to have a reckoning with them. Let us then beware of being found unprofitable servants; but rather let it be our object now in this mortal state to learn and love his righteousness, that "at his second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in his sight."

THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL.

BY THE

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ST. MATTHEW XVI. 25.

*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever
will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

THIS, my brethren, is one of the wonderful sayings of Scripture, so full, that drawing from it always, we never can draw out all its fullness—so rich, that ever enriching ourselves, we can never exhaust all its riches—a seeming contradiction, yet the most real truth: a saying that may at first sight appear slight and trivial beside the shewy and splendid sayings of the wise men of this world, yet is it in very deed wiser than them all. Yea, brethren, these words (twice repeated by our Lord), hold the keys of life and of death, of heaven and of hell. To believe them, and to believe Him who spake them, is life and blessedness. To doubt these words, or to act contrary to them, is to lose everything, for it is to lose CHRIST, and in losing Him to lose our own selves.

What, then, are these words? What is the mighty truth which they contain? What is this seeking to save our life, which brings with it (according to the sure word of CHRIST) the losing of our life? What is this willingness to lose our life, in which only we find or save it for eternity?

Now the seeking to save our life, which CHRIST warns us against, is the seeking to enjoy our life according to

the dictates of the flesh and of the world—the laying out our life on the scheme of self-pleasing and self-indulging, instead of the plan of GOD-pleasing and self-denying. As you will observe, the words come immediately after the command to take up the cross: “Then said JESUS unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” So that, you perceive, to seek to save our life, is to refuse to do this, which CHRIST bids,—is to refuse to take up the cross. Now we may give you an example or two from Holy Scripture of persons seeking to save their lives and losing them. Dives sought to save his life; he thought to find his life in the purple and the fine linen, and the daily sumptuous fare; he thought his life was in those things. That man whose fields brought forth largely, and who bade his soul enjoy itself for many years, he counted that he had found his life, that it was in his “much goods laid up for many years*,” while yet upon that very night he was about to make proof that a man’s life does *not* consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Peter wished our blessed Lord to save his life in this evil sense, when the Lord having spoken of his decease at Jerusalem, and of all that awaited Him there, Peter interfered, and said, “Be it far from thee, Lord;” and for this got that severe rebuke, and was called Satan; for indeed what was he doing but what Satan had done before, when in the wilderness he also proposed to CHRIST to save his life, to choose worldly glory, the kingdoms of the world, and their pomp and ease, instead of worldly suffering and worldly shame for his portion?

* St. Luke xii. 19.

And we, my brethren, we are seeking in this same false sense to save our lives whenever we shrink from unwelcome duty, whenever it seems to us that the end of life is to make provision for the flesh; whensoever we choose ease instead of the labour which GOD lays on us; whensoever we refuse to spend or to be spent for CHRIST's sake.

But what is the issue of this endeavour? The Lord himself has told us: he that will save his life shall lose it. Nor does this merely mean that at the end, that at the day of judgment, the life of such a man shall be forcibly rent away from him,—that till that day he shall have found it and kept it,—and but for this forcible interference of GOD that he would have kept it for ever. Oh no, my brethren, the day of judgment is not the day of the sinner's loss; it is the day indeed of the *sealing* of his loss for eternity; it is the day when that loss is completed, when the terrible certainty that he has lost all, and lost it for ever, flashes upon him; but the loss itself has been going on long before. He that would save his life has been losing it—has been losing a portion of it, of his true life, at each of his endeavours thus falsely to save it. At each moment when the world seemed more to him than GOD—at each allowed selfishness—at each unpermitted snatching at a worldly joy—at each choosing to serve himself rather than to serve others, he lost his life, he lost a portion of it, of his true life which was in GOD. He won a false joy, but he lost a true one; he opened to himself what may have seemed a fountain of joy, yet which proved only a muddy pool, soon to be dried up; but he closed against himself a spring of gladness that would have sprung up unto life eternal: he may have got some of the world's pebbles, but he gave for them heaven's jewels.

Oh, brethren, be sure of this, you shall lose your life if you seek to save it; and you shall lose it not merely by and by, but you shall lose it *now*. Lay out your lives for enjoyment, and enjoyment shall fly from you altogether. Seek to make yourselves the centre of everything, and you shall be left out of the great circle—the only circle of blessedness, whereof God is the centre. Dare to think that anything but love can make you rich, that anything is of worth save a place in God's heart and a place in your brethren's hearts; that anything can truly enrich you save this loving and being loved;—dare to think that money can make you rich, that honours can make you happy; that success in life is the object of life;—dare to think this, and to act upon it, and you shall be stricken with poverty, with poverty of spirit, with barrenness of soul, with a withering and drought upon your hearts. Having sought to save your lives, you shall lose them, inevitably lose all which makes life to be worth the living.

Brethren, see we not this even in the things of this world? See we not that which is a sufficiently near approach to this fact of the spiritual world to explain it, and to represent it vividly to our minds? A soldier that flees from battle,—who, when others for duty and for country are giving themselves to wounds and to death, skulks from danger,—he may by so doing, in the literal sense of the words, save his life; but has he not really lost it—lost all which makes life worth the living? What remains for him, with the brand of a coward on his brow, but to creep through obscure and narrow passages to his grave? For instance, those three hundred whom some of us have read of, that in Greece of old determined to give themselves unto death in guarding against the invader the narrow passage of their native

land—feel we not that the two who, in the hour of danger, fled,—who, as men might speak, saved their lives,—really lost them? while all those others who, for hearth and for home, for wife and for children, and to keep inviolate the sanctities of their temples, gave away their lives, did indeed, after the manner of men, find those lives,—in the losing found them, as in the saving they would have lost them?

And this brings us to the second part of our Saviour's declaration. "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Here too comparisons are at hand, drawn from earth and things earthly, which in part may help to a realizing of the Lord's words. The merchant, when he commits his precious wares, his costly merchandizes, all which was already safely his, to the perils of the deep, to the thousand chances of the sea, what is he but losing his wares that he may find them, that they may come back to him in a richer shape, in a larger abundance? And the husbandman, when he casts his seed into the ground, he loses his seed,—it is no longer his, he could not recover it if he would,—it has turned into corruption. Yet he loses that he may find it, that it may come back thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold into his garners. This image CHRIST himself has appropriated and sanctified, when speaking of the life of the Church, which should have its root in his death—when speaking of that death as life-giving to many, He says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*." And the mother, out of what pain and death-peril the new life of her child is given her. She is willing to lose her own life that she may find it again in the new life

* St. John xii. 24.

of the child, that shall be born into the world, that shall call her by the holy name of mother.

And we can understand further what being willing to lose our life is, by taking two or three examples from among the saints of God. Abraham was willing to lose his life, when he obeyed that voice which said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred," and journeyed to a land which he knew not, and where he had not a foot of land in possession. And Moses, when he chose the reproach of CHRIST, rather than the riches of Egypt and to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And Joseph, when a dungeon seemed better to him than to sin against God. And the three children, when they chose the fiery flames, rather than to do guilty homage to an heathen idol. And Paul, when he exchanged all honours that his country could have given him, to take part with the crucified Galilæan. All these lost their lives, that they might find them. They threw away their life and all that it had promising, all that it had flattering, counting it all cheap as clods of the ground, that they might find their lives in God.

And, brethren, think not that this blessed losing of the life, to which CHRIST summons us, is confined to those great ventures of faith, those single and memorable acts of a mighty reliance upon God, which are written for ever in the record of his Word. At every moment of our lives, God says unto each one of us,—Wilt thou trust me, wilt thou yield me thy life, to receive it an higher and nobler life? Wilt thou die unto thyself, that thou mayest live unto me? Wilt thou lose that thou mayest find? You will ask perhaps, How is God saying this unto me? He is saying it whenever He puts in your way an act of self-denial, whenever He bids you to something unwelcome to the natural mind,

from which flesh and blood would shrink: whenever He summons you to labour, when you would fain have chosen ease: to a low place, when you would fain have had a high one: to dishonour, when the world offers you honour: to painfulness, when the world would have yielded you pleasure: to a fast, when you might have feasted: to the house of sorrow, when the world would have introduced you to the house of mirth. The summons to Christian almsgiving, is it not a slight realizing of this? For what is that Christian almsgiving, when it is at all worthy of the name? You throw forth, that you may receive back: you cast upon the waters, that you may find after many days. You believe, that so to lose your earthly mammon is really to save it,—that you will find it an hundredfold in the prayers of God's poor,—in the affections of his suffering saints,—in God himself, who will make himself your debtor for all that you have lent to them.

Oh, brethren, be bold to believe this truth, and to act upon it,—that to lose your life is to find it. Dare to believe that the law of self-sacrifice is the law of God's moral world; that no man may live for himself; that if he will attempt it, his life shall be no life, for it shall be death. To this law the Son of God set his seal, when He lived for men and when He died for them; yea, the Father set his seal to it also, when He gave up the well-beloved Son of his love,—the Son that had been in his bosom from eternity,—to the shameful death of the cross; so that this law of self-sacrifice not merely rules in earth, but it rules in heaven. Only in hell it rules not, and therefore hell is hell. And earth, my brethren, as it denies this law, becomes like to hell; as it approves it, becomes like to heaven.

Fear not to act on this law: dare to throw away your

life, that you may receive back a richer life. Each thing that promises pleasure to the flesh, that flatters the natural mind,—yet if God bids you renounce it, do so boldly. Lose your life, and you shall find it; live for your brethren in acts of patience, of self-denial, of labour, and you shall be living truly for yourself. Say not, that such a life will be dreary—that such a life will be desolate—that such a life will be empty of all real enjoyment;—oh, no, it shall be with you as it was with Daniel and his youthful companions: they throve upon their pulse, their countenances were fairer and better liking than were theirs that fed upon the king's dainties. So is it with children of God; they thrive on their harder fare, better than children of the world on the world's dainties. They have more joy in their hearts, more life in their souls, more gladness on their countenances. And why? because, believing CHRIST's word, and daring to lose their lives, they are evermore finding them again in Him.

IN WHAT SPIRIT WE MAY CONTEMPLATE OUR GROWTH IN GRACE.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

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1 CORINTHIANS XV. 10.

By the grace of God I am what I am.

THERE is no one truth which is set forth more clearly in the word of GOD than this, that “without holiness no man shall see the LORD.” The Gospel, indeed, is full of comfort to the *repentant* sinner:—the glad tidings of forgiveness for JESUS CHRIST’S sake are written in the plainest terms:—“their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,” is what GOD says to his people in every page of that book which tells how JESUS, “for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,” and died. But “His name shall be called JESUS,” said the Angel of GOD, “for He shall save his people *from* their sins.” JESUS CHRIST bore the punishment which was due to us for the transgression of GOD’S law; but He did more than this,—for something more than this was needed for a corrupt and sinful creature. He could not reconcile to GOD the Father any who were incapable of loving Him. He could not make Heaven a place of happiness to those who should continue to love sin and hate righteousness. And yet no man loves GOD by nature,—no man of himself loves righteousness. Therefore JESUS came to save us from our corruptions like-

wise: that when our pardon was purchased, He might "make us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us,"—that He might make us children of God,—that when we had learnt the life of God's children upon earth by faith, we might go to live for ever with God in Heaven.

As surely then as we know, that "he that committeth sin is of the Devil," and therefore is not in a state of salvation; so surely do we know, that "he that sinneth not, is born of God, and knoweth God, and is passed from death unto life." It is the SPIRIT of God which has worked the change within him,—for he is become, or at least he is becoming, what none can be by nature,—and therefore he may truly affirm in the language of St. Paul, "the SPIRIT beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and if a child then an heir,—heir of God, and joint-heir with CHRIST."

A holy life, therefore,—a love of holiness,—a dislike for the pleasures of sin,—a power to deny ourselves,—a control over our wishes, and our tempers, and our tongues,—these are points in a Christian's character which he ought to look for, and which he may well look upon with satisfaction, if he finds that he has, in any measure, attained to them. He may well feel, as one who has been long sick feels, when he finds himself at length able to do a little more than he could do before; it is the proof of returning health; he is not proud of it; he does not take credit to himself for it; but he thanks the Giver of all goodness:—he is happier, and he has a right to be so.

What was it then, it may be asked, which our blessed Saviour blamed in the character of the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray at the same time with the Publican, as told in the Parable which has just

been read in the Gospel for the day? "The Pharisee prayed thus with himself: LORD, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess." Our Saviour does not say, that he had mistaken his own case,—that he *was* an extortioner, or unjust, or an adulterer; He does not say that his fasting and the payment of his tithes were not regular and strict. Nor does He tell us that he did wrong in thanking God for this. He does not tell us, that it was wrong to praise God for any measure of goodness which we may suppose to have proceeded from the help of God's Spirit and God's Providence. What then was it which our Saviour regarded as deserving reproof in persons thinking, as this Pharisee, over their good deeds?

The answer to this question will be found, by considering the feelings which led St. Paul to use the words of my text, when speaking of what he had done as an Apostle of JESUS CHRIST in the service of his Heavenly Master. And to this comparison our Church appears to direct our attention, by having appointed the passage to which I refer as the Epistle for the day on which this parable is read in the Gospel.

The first that we read of St. Paul's history is, that he was a bitter enemy of CHRIST's religion, and that he persecuted unto death all that he could find believing on the name of JESUS. But God was pleased to take away from him the blindness which made him think that he was doing GOD service by destroying those who preached CHRIST crucified. His Saviour himself appeared to him and instructed him in the truth; and commissioned him to declare to the Gentiles the mercy which He had purchased for them with his precious blood.

From this time St. Paul was as zealous in the service of JESUS CHRIST as he had before been in opposing Him. No labours, no perils, no sufferings, were too much for him. Almost every country of the then known world profited by that love of souls with which he went forth to preach the Gospel, if he could, to every creature.

When we read the history of St. Paul, we cannot help admiring and praising his courage and his devotion to the service of CHRIST. St. Paul himself, however, seems never to have thought of his own labours, without wondering at the exceeding mercy of GOD, which had overlooked his sins, and taken him into his service, and enabled him to act in a manner worthy of his goodness. In the text which we are considering, for instance, he had been mentioning the various persons who were able to testify that JESUS CHRIST had risen from the dead. "He was seen of Cephas," says he; "then of the twelve. After that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; after that He was seen of James; then of all the apostles: and last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." And here was what many a mind, and every unconverted mind, would have immediately reflected on with pride. JESUS CHRIST, several years after He had left the earth, and had ceased to communicate visibly even with his most beloved disciples, had appeared specially to St. Paul, to teach him, and to qualify him to take a distinguished part in the most blessed work which GOD had ever commissioned man to undertake. Among the thousands who, as far as man could judge, might have served GOD as well as he could, he had been selected to perform a task of which angels might have been proud. Was St. Paul then proud of the distinction with which GOD had honoured him? Far from it. He thought immediately of his former

unworthiness—of the goodness and mercy of God. “For I am the least of the apostles,” says he; “that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of CHRIST. But by the grace of God I am what I am.” And even when he calls to mind that he had used this grace of God with faithfulness, he feels no pride: so far from it, that he seems rather to mention it as a further proof of God’s mercy to an undeserving creature, as if the Almighty had added to all his other bounties in enabling him, all unworthy as he felt himself, to serve him so well. “And his grace which was given me was not in vain; for I laboured more abundantly than they all: *yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me.*”

Here then seems to be the difference between the feelings with which St. Paul contemplated his good deeds, and those which are attributed to the Pharisee in the parable. The mercy of God, which had enabled him to perform them, brought to St. Paul’s recollection, with more bitterness and more self-abasement, the errors and blindness and transgressions of his earlier years, while the Pharisee forgot them. The one thought only of the virtue to which he had attained, the other also of the wickedness from which, by God’s help, he had escaped. The one was made more humble by seeing what God’s grace had enabled him to do, the other was made prouder.

It is to be feared, that there are not a few in every congregation, who have no need of the lesson taught us in the parable of the Pharisee’s prayer, merely because they cannot thank God that they are not as other men, even those who are farthest from the kingdom of heaven. Engaged in wickedness, loving and practising sin, they cannot say, “By the grace of God I am what I am;” but

rather, they have need to feel, that they have despised God's grace, and in spite of God's warnings they have persisted in the works of darkness. Such never, surely, can be Pharisees: they never can be proud, even if, by the overflowing goodness of God, they are at length roused to a concern for their souls, and led to better things. As yet, however, they have to learn the prayer of the poor Publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And God grant that they may understand, that they cannot utter that prayer in vain. He who scorned not to be thought the sinner's friend is still looking upon those whom He came from heaven to save; is still waiting to be gracious; is still desirous to seek and to save that which was lost; is still the same as when He cried, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

But there are many also, whom God's good providence has placed in such a state of life that they have not known the temptations which have led others into open sin and rebellion against their Maker. Such will remember the care with which their parents brought them up; the good fortune, as it was called, by which they were led to the society of those who set them a good example, or were placed under the government of those who enforced regular and steady habits. And now they will reflect with satisfaction that they are useful members of society; that they have a character free from reproach. All this while they may be very far from that blessed state, in which the love of God is the ruling feeling of the heart. And yet, my brethren, they have much reason to say, each of them, "By the grace of God I am what I am." And to say this, and to reflect upon it, may be, under God, the means of rousing them

to a higher and a happier degree of religion. When they witness the wickedness which is openly done around them; when they read of the crimes which are daily perpetrated by beings wearing the form of man, but little superior to the beasts; nay, when they remember, as too many may remember, the companions, the friends, the relations, who set out in life with the same advantages, in the same station, the same respectability, with themselves, who are now disgraced in character, or sunk in evil habits; verily they may thank God that they are not as other men are. They may bless God, who hath made them to differ. They have escaped thus far, "as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and they are delivered." They may fancy that they can trace the causes which led others astray, and left them in a safer path. But why their lot in life was not the worse one; why they met with fewer temptations, or escaped them, they will not be able to determine, unless they are ready to acknowledge, "This hath God done."

Let them remember, then, that they were born with the same nature, as the worst of those who have disgraced the name of man. God's good providence has guarded them from dangers by which others have been lost. By the grace of God they are what they are.

But are they even now what God would desire them to be; nay, what all must be who would live with God for ever? Are they what by the grace of God they may be? They may well thank God, that by education, and by other causes which His goodness has directed, they are not slaves of gross and hardening habits of sin; that they have not learnt to hate the name of religion; that they are not ashamed of the Gospel of CHRIST, but are glad to number themselves among the people of the LORD. All this is indeed matter for thankfulness; for it might have been otherwise. But is it all that they

look to be? Is it merely the maintenance of man's good opinion which they are anxious to obtain? Is it merely the inconveniences, the sorrows, and the sufferings resulting from sin in this world, that they are desirous to avoid? Alas! these things will go but little way towards securing them that for which they were made, and for which JESUS CHRIST came down from heaven and died. "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "blessed are the meek;" "blessed are the peacemakers;" "blessed are the merciful;" "blessed are the pure in heart;" "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness;" for these are the dispositions which make men like the GOD who created them in His own image in order that they might be qualified to live for ever with Him; these are the fruits by which the presence of CHRIST'S Spirit is discerned, and "if any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his."

But shall we say, that because these fruits are wanting in any man; because he has little to testify that the Spirit of CHRIST is leading him, and therefore has little reason to believe that he belongs to that happy number who are walking in the path of life; shall we say that he has nothing which may lead him to a better hope? Nay, let him rather believe that GOD is waiting to be gracious to him. Let him, while he thanks GOD that He has done so much for him, persuade himself that GOD is ready to do all that is needful for his everlasting happiness. He might have been as some are, who are lower than the brutes. GOD has prevented it. And why? "Because He had a favour unto him." Let him think of this. The GOD of Heaven has interfered in his behalf. And though he may cast off GOD, let him be assured that GOD will never cast off him, if he is willing to profit by His love.

But I would believe that there are some present who

have already advanced in religion far beyond the point to which I have been referring, and are receiving daily and hourly comfort from the reflexion contained in the words of my text. Some few, perhaps, from their earliest years are led to struggle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and by the Spirit of GOD are enabled to overcome. Alas! for the credit of a Christian people, how seldom can we dare to hope that this is done! So seldom, indeed, that some are led to doubt the efficacy of that Sacrament by which our children are brought into covenant with GOD, and entitled to regard Him as their Father in JESUS CHRIST. We bring our children to the waters of Baptism, and pray, "that our Lord JESUS CHRIST will vouchsafe to receive them, to release them of their sins, to sanctify them with the HOLY GHOST, to give them the Kingdom of Heaven and everlasting life;" and are bid to believe undoubtingly that they *are* favourably received and made GOD's children. And, my brethren, I do not doubt that they are so received. I do not doubt that they may address GOD with the first utterance of their lips in those words which our blessed Saviour has taught us, "Our Father, which art in Heaven!" But how seldom do parents take any pains to bring about that which they are taught to pray for in the Baptismal service, that their children "may lead the rest of their lives according to that beginning!" How often are they allowed to witness the indulgence of wrong passions and wrong tempers! How often are they accustomed from their earliest years to scenes of vice! And if this is not the case, at least how often are they left to find their own way to heaven, as if there were no Devil, who like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour,—as if there were no flesh to be subdued, no world to tempt them to their ruin!

And is it strange, then, that the tares which are scattered so thickly should spring up and choke the good seed? Is it strange that the fruits of the Spirit do not appear when parents have sown only to the flesh? Is it to be wondered at that so many of these little children,—children of GOD I will still call them,—early leave their Heavenly Father's house, and take their journey into a far country?

Thanks be to GOD! He is more mindful of the covenant which He has made than they are. He forgets not that they are his children. He devises means to bring them to themselves. And when He has put into their hearts to return to Him, He sees them even when they are a great way off, and runs to meet them.

“By the grace of GOD I am what I am,” every such person will say, when first he finds himself stopped in the course which would have led him to destruction. And while he struggles with the bad habits which he has acquired, and tries to check the evil tempers which he has indulged till they have become too strong for him, he will feel that if the Spirit of GOD did not help his infirmities he must still be lost. And while he finds from day to day that his prayers for help are answered,—that his strength is increasing,—that his spiritual health is in progress towards restoration,—that something which was wrong within him is giving way to what is right,—he will attribute his improvement more certainly, and more gratefully too, to the grace of GOD.

And then too, “By the grace of GOD I am what I am,” will become not merely the expression of satisfaction, or of humiliation, or of gratitude:—it will not refer only to what is past, but will add strength to the faith which should make him lean only on GOD for the future. The path of life will still be narrow to him. The diffi-

culties of a Christian course will still distress him. The flesh will still lust against the Spirit, and prove to him that he is a weak and helpless creature. What a comfort then will it be to him to reflect on what God has done for his soul. God has awakened him to care; God has heard his prayers; God has aided him in his spiritual distresses; God has brought him on his way thus far. And how can he doubt that He who has thus begun a good work in him will perform it unto the day of JESUS CHRIST?

THE CHURCH ON EARTH, THE APPOINTED WAY TO THE HEAVENLY CHURCH.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

BY

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TO THE LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

ST. JOHN III. 12.

*If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how
shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?*

IN order to apprehend clearly and fully the force of this important sentence in our blessed Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, it is necessary to read the first twenty-one verses of the chapter attentively, and to weigh the argument carefully in all its bearings. It will then be evident that JESUS, in speaking of "earthly" and "heavenly things," could only refer to the single subject of discussion, namely, the Church of God under the new dispensation of the Gospel; that the "earthly things" are no other than the outward visible means of grace ordained in his Church; and the "heavenly things" the inward gifts and spiritual doctrines which they are to convey and to teach. And the great truth inculcated is *this*—that they who reject or despise the ordinances of the visible Church will not be partakers in its blessings, nor believers, with a lively and saving faith, in its doctrines.

Our Saviour's discourse with Nicodemus commences with an acknowledgment on the part of the Jewish doctor that JESUS was "a Teacher sent from God;" to

which our Lord replies, as the first rudiment of divine teaching, by asserting the indispensable necessity of regeneration. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD." The idea of a new birth had evidently never occurred to the mind of Nicodemus, and his answer betrays nothing but doubt and perplexity. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

The Lord then explains to him, that the new or second birth in question is not a carnal and natural, but a spiritual regeneration by "water and the SPIRIT," that is, by the sacrament of baptism, with its appointed outward form, and its accompanying gift of grace. Nicodemus still continuing to express his doubts of the possibility, that the gift of the SPIRIT should depend on the administration of so simple a ceremony, (which had been in frequent use among heathens and among the Jews, as a mere purifying rite,) the Lord proceeds to reprove his ignorance of the law of which he professed to be a doctor, and which, rightly understood, would have led to the very conclusion which he was inculcating; the necessity of the Sacraments to the validity and blessings of the Covenant.

"If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" If you will not understand me when I describe to you the outward ordinances of the Church, and their spiritual effects, how shall I make you comprehend the higher doctrines, and the mysteries of my heavenly kingdom? If you are incredulous respecting "the washing of regeneration," which you *can see*, how will you receive by faith the doctrine of the atonement, the washing of the guilty soul in the blood of the Lamb, which you *cannot see*? If you do not comprehend the institutions of the

visible Church on earth, how are you to become capable of the operations of the invisible Church in heaven?

This is, as I observed, a most important inquiry, and leads to a conclusion upon which all our hopes depend. The conclusion appears to me to be clearly *this*: that *they* who, from their worldly and carnal prejudices, misunderstand and undervalue the ordinances of the Church as appointed in the Gospel, will never come to a right apprehension of spiritual gifts, nor to a right faith in evangelical doctrine.

I am not concerned to rebut the charges of intolerance and illiberality, which the plain statement of Scriptural truth is sure to bring upon us in these self-willed times. We do not proceed to judge other men upon the conclusions to which our doctrines lead us: we are forbidden to judge others, and if we were not forbidden, our own feelings shrink from it. But if the doctrines of God's Holy Word, when rightly expounded, lead inevitably to conclusions which manifestly involve the condemnation of prevailing opinions and modes of conduct, we *may* lament, but we *dare not* suppress them: we *must* "declare to you the whole counsel of GOD, that we may be pure from the blood of all men."

I repeat, therefore, that we are taught, by our Redeemer's words in the text, to consider a dutiful obedience to the outward discipline of the Church as essential to a participation in its spiritual blessings, that is, as essential to salvation; for I know of no other means of salvation given to men in the Gospel than through the appointed channels,—no other promises than those vouchsafed to the Church of CHRIST.

If it be asked, What is the Church of CHRIST? I shall answer unhesitatingly, that I am here speaking of the *visible* Church on earth, as the only Ark in which sinners

can be wafted through the deluge of wrath to the invisible Church in heaven. And by the visible Church on earth I certainly do *not* mean to convey a vague indeterminate idea of a body compounded of all kinds of jarring sects, maintaining conflicting opinions, and bound together by no recognised form of government, or rule of faith; nor yet of a still more undefinable body, consisting of true believers, the elect people of God, who shall finally be heirs of his kingdom, as they are now members of his invisible Church. Such loose ways of describing the visible Church have, unhappily, been too common within the last two centuries, in that comparatively small portion of the Christian world which is peculiarly called Protestant: but since it can only tend to confuse our notions, and lead us astray from the truth, I shall adopt that definition of the visible Church which may fairly be said to have been universal for sixteen hundred years, and which is still firmly maintained by our own branch, and by every true branch of the Catholic body.

The visible Church, then, is a society of men professing the faith of CHRIST, and admitted into membership with his adopted children, by means of outward forms instituted by himself and his Apostles in the Gospel. JESUS CHRIST is himself the head of this society, and his HOLY SPIRIT is with it, as its ruler and guide, till He shall come again in person. In the mean time He has deputed human governors, and pastors, and teachers in his Church, and invested them with a portion of his own authority; He has framed laws, and ordained a discipline, and provided means of grace, and ceremonies of worship; and He has entrusted the administration of the sacraments and public offices of religion to an order of men, the *first* of whom He appointed *himself*, confiding to *them* and their successors *exclusively* the power to ordain others;

so that no man can be a Gospel minister unless he can show that he derives his commission in regular and unbroken succession from the Apostles; nor is any man a member of the visible Church unless he is in strict communion with such ministers, and under due subordination to them.

I have already remarked, that we have no concern with the supposed illiberality of this principle. If it is the plain doctrine of the New Testament, we can only reply to the gainsayers, that they are reproaching "not man, but God."

This being what we understand by the visible Church on earth,—a society of believers instituted by JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles, and bound together into one body by a common discipline, and rule of faith, throughout the whole world, and maintaining that the Protestant Episcopal Church in this empire is a sound and Apostolical branch of the Church universal or Catholic Body of CHRIST;—let us proceed to consider what are those "earthly things," those outward and visible means appointed in our Church by our Divine Head, which if we do not rightly appreciate, we become incapable of his inward and spiritual grace, and of a living faith in his word, and are thus excluded from "heavenly things."

I. The earthly institution first mentioned by our Lord to Nicodemus as necessary to man's salvation under the dispensation of the Gospel, is the sacrament of baptism; and He specifies both the outward form and the inward spiritual grace of regeneration so explicitly, that scarcely any description of persons, professing to receive the New Testament as the Word of GOD, have ventured to call in question the obligation of all Christians to receive this rite. In modern times, indeed, and

in the Western Church, a very inconsiderable body maintain the impropriety and inefficacy of infant baptism, and administer the ordinance to adults only. And it ought to be remarked that, (although the Church of England directs her ministers to exhort their people to bring all infants to the holy font without needless delay, and to immerse them, or, in case of weakness, to sprinkle them in the laver of regeneration,) yet our Church does not excommunicate nor reject as heretics such persons as may choose to defer it to mature age, but, on the contrary, provides an office expressly for the baptism of such as are of riper years.

It is true that the reformers of our Liturgy, in compiling this office, had probably an eye to the case of adult converts; still the fact remains that the Church does not expel from her society those members who delay the baptism of their children, although, as I have observed, she directs her ministers to admonish them of their neglect. The liberality of our Church, however, in this instance, and the indulgence shown to some degrees of prejudice and error, cannot affect the truth of Scriptural doctrine, nor the Apostolical tradition of the Catholic body, which clearly establishes the ordinance of infant baptism as practised throughout the Christian world, with scarcely an exception*, for more than fifteen hundred years, and still maintained by all professors of the Gospel, with the exception of one or two very recent and comparatively inconsiderable sects.

In what manner the spiritual blessing follows the due administration of the rite, is among the deep things of the LORD our GOD. JESUS CHRIST expressly warns us that we can no more comprehend it, than we can tell

* The Manichees denied infant baptism.

whence come the winds of heaven, (whose sound we hear,) nor where they depart. Of *this*, however, we are assured, that the neglect or the perversion of the ordinance deprives us of the genuine gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT, and that a course of wilful sin excludes baptized persons from the blessings of the Gospel.

II. It is not recorded that our Lord proceeded to instruct Nicodemus in any other institution of his Church; the object in view was to establish a general principle, for which purpose a particular instance was selected,—the principle already repeatedly mentioned, that the rejection of appointed means of grace in the Church, deprives us of the favour of God. But though the Lord does not appear to have mentioned other ordinances in this particular conversation, no reader of the New Testament can be ignorant, that on other occasions He fully carried out the principle and the duty of “fulfilling all righteousness,” which He had laid down as inviolable at his own baptism.

Every reader of his Testament must recollect the strong language in which He requires *all* his disciples to partake of the Holy Eucharist “in remembrance of his body broken, and his blood shed for us;”—and the tradition of the Universal Church, for many ages, places the Lord’s Supper on the same ground with the Jewish Passover, as essential to our continuance in the covenant with our God. By the law of Moses, every Jew who wilfully abstained from the sacramental feast, was declared liable to be “cut off from his people;” and by the plainest inference from the Gospel, sanctioned by the general adoption of the Church to this day, every Christian who wilfully abstains from the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, cuts himself off from membership in the Lord’s Body, and forfeits the privileges of the New Cove-

nant. Such nominal Christians render themselves incapable of a saving faith in "heavenly things," by their neglect of "earthly things;" and if they act thus from a carnal pride in their own understanding, and a vain reliance on their own spiritual views, speaking with contempt of the ordinances of the Church as of mere forms, they "add sin to sin."

III. Another ordinance of the Universal or Catholic Church which we deem Apostolical, is "the Rule of Faith." It has, of late years, been a common practice to call the Scriptures *the Rule of Faith*; and the expression is not unfrequent among the divines of the last century; but this inaccurate manner of writing was never adopted in the primitive Church, nor by our own Reformers. The thing to be measured must not be confounded with the rule which measures it. The Word of God is the "*subject* of Faith;" it is "*what we believe*;" it is *all* that we believe *as necessary to salvation*; it contains the "heavenly things" which JESUS CHRIST reveals to those who obediently receive the "earthly things;" but the manner in which we are to receive the Word of God, the sense in which we are to understand it, is properly called the Rule, or Canon, of Faith; and by this expression the Primitive Church undoubtedly understood *the Creed**; and as certainly the Creeds and Articles of the Church, constitute, at this day, *the Rule of Faith* by which the Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted. They who reject *this* rule, fall from one heresy to another till they either become disgusted with endless doubts and vacillations, and return with renewed attachment to the bosom of the Church; or, wandering further and further

* See BISHOP KAYE'S *Charge* of 1840, pp. 36, 37, 38, 39; and the quotations from Irenæus there given.

from the truth of God's Holy Word, conclude in practical unbelief. This has been the brief history of all the sects which have arisen, and changed, and disappeared, since the beginning; "unstable as water," and "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," they have rarely remained steadfast to any opinion till a second generation; but "ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," they have departed from the teaching of their founders into new and stranger notions, till the more sober-minded among them have sought refuge in the permanent doctrines and institutions of the Church; and the rest have split into endless schisms, and joined the ranks of rebellious unbelievers.

IV. Inseparably connected with unity of Faith is community of worship. It is indeed inconceivable that any one *can*, even cursorily, read the New Testament, without being forcibly struck, and fully convinced by the numberless glaring proofs that our Lord and his Apostles intended the Christian Church to be *one Catholic body* which might "with *one voice*, and *one mouth*, glorify GOD." Now, I would beg you here to observe that the two expressions "*one voice*, and *one mouth*," do not mean the same thing. By "*one voice*" the Apostle conveys the idea of a common form of worship, all using the same words; and this common form of prayer and thanksgiving is to be offered up "*with one mouth*," that is, in the public assemblies of the saints, all uniting in the same solemn act.

It will at once be seen that this view of the subject involves the necessity of a set form of public worship to be adopted by the whole Church; but it is the less necessary to enter upon the discussion of that topic now, since none but very ignorant persons can possibly doubt that liturgies and forms of Divine service were univer-

sally in use in the Christian Church from the earliest ages; and that our own Prayer-Book is little more than a compilation from those venerable remains of the highest antiquity. If extempore prayer were ever allowed in the Church, it was only in the times of unquestioned miracles, and clear inspiration. "Extempore prayer," says Augustine, "is mere rashness."

V. Lastly, the Church of CHRIST cannot exist without its appointed ministry; and since the Church of CHRIST is catholic or universal, and consequently *one*, there *can* be but *one* ministry. This ministry consists of an order of men, ordained, and set apart to administer the sacraments and ordinances of the Gospel, and to preach its doctrines; and, as they are denounced by the severest threatenings of woe, if they neglect their duty, or deviate from the rule of faith, and soundness of speech, so are the most awful denunciations recorded against those who presume to take this office upon themselves without an effectual call and a lawful commission.

And truly it is of vital importance to the flock of CHRIST, to be assured that those persons who have the spiritual rule over them are *really* "ministers of the New Testament," *really* authorized to preach the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, to pronounce the absolution of the Church, to afford to the sick and dying the last consolations of religion! For, if the "ambassadors of CHRIST" are *not duly* authorized by himself, the message is vain, the means of grace ineffectual, the spiritual comfort a delusion!

How, then, are the people to know the true shepherds, deputed by the Great and Good Shepherd of the whole flock, from false pretenders, from "thieves and robbers?" Can they "discern spirits?" No one, I suppose, pretends to any such power. Will they be

guided by the apparent talent, or eloquence, or zeal,—by what are vulgarly called *the gifts*, of the teacher? This would come much to the same thing; and it is notorious that gifts of this kind are so far from being authentic proofs of a divine commission, that they are usually the most conspicuous among the most mischievous of mankind, among Socialists, for example, and Ranters, and Antinomians of every description. Will they take the bare assertion of any man, that he is “a teacher sent from God?” This would manifestly be to run a risk of perpetual deception in a matter wherein, of all others, it is most essential to be perfectly assured. There remains only *the testimony of the Church*; and this testimony is unquestionable. The Church recognizes no other ministry of the Gospel than that constituted by the Apostles under the express direction of JESUS CHRIST himself, and handed down from them in uninterrupted succession to the end. The chain is, and must be, *unbroken*, or else the ministry, and consequently the Church, would cease to exist, and the gates of hell would prevail against it. As, under the Law, the priesthood was exclusively limited to the descendants of Aaron’s body; so, under the Gospel, the commission of the ministry is exclusively limited to the descendants of the Apostles by succession.

It would be easy to enlarge on this subject; but it is sufficient for my present purpose to have mentioned the leading points among those “earthly things,” which, if “ye believe not,” you become incapable of “believing the heavenly things.” And experience has abundantly proved this truth. The abandonment of the outward means of Church communion has invariably led to unsound doctrine,—to the perversion, and ultimately to the denial of those essential foundations on which the whole fabric of Christian faith depends. I am not speaking of

individuals, but of bodies; not of bodies at this or that moment, but in their whole career; and surely I am amply borne out, more and more borne out by the truth of history, by the facts of every day, by the complaints of Dissenters themselves, in the assertion that there is no stability of faith or doctrine in the short-lived career of any among the innumerable sects which have "gone out from us;" and where there is no stability nor consistency, what communion can there be with *Him* who is emphatically "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?"

That the spirit of division which at present distracts our portion of the Western Church, and retards the propagation of the Gospel, should be long permitted to prevent the complete establishment of the kingdom of God we need not fear. The Catholic Church of CHRIST has his promise which cannot fail, and its truth will be made manifest to all men, whenever He shall see fit to bestow upon mankind at large his spiritual blessing. In the mean time it is our duty, in all meekness, but with all due firmness, to assert the true doctrines of that Church which is declared to be "the pillar and ground of the truth;" and to expose the fallacies of those prevailing notions respecting it, which "beguile unstable souls," and lead them astray after "another Gospel," "which indeed is *not another*, but there be some that would pervert the Gospel of CHRIST."

Before I conclude I must beg leave to guard myself against one misconception of what I have said. The doctrine which I have laid down will be called "*popish doctrine*" by the ignorant and by the perverse. But, in truth, it is the *only* ground on which we can *securely* and *triumphantly* contend against the errors, the corruptions, the *heresy*, and the *schism*, of the Romish Church. If we abandon *this ground* we give that Church an advantage, *against which* we cannot prevail.

The time will not admit that I should enter further into that part of the argument now. I hope to expose the unscriptural fallacies of the Romish heresy in a subsequent discourse. But, on the other hand, I will not shrink from the avowal, that I consider Protestantism without the pale of the Catholic Church to be equally inconsistent with the doctrines of the New Testament, and equally dangerous to the salvation of those who profess it.

The universal Church of CHRIST is the "earthly" way of salvation. Our own branch of that body is, I firmly believe, as free from essential unsoundness of doctrine, or from practices inconsistent with the Word of God, and as clear in the proof of its apostolical succession in the ministry, as any portion of the Church ever has been since primitive times. We are, therefore, "without excuse" if we depart from it, and create, or partake in, schisms of the body. The pretext of spiritual views, and of a disregard for "earthly things," will not avail us. We are condemned by our Lord's own doctrine; by the teaching of his Apostles; and by the voice of his universal Church; and our faith in "heavenly things" will not bring forth the fruits of faith now, nor stand the test of the judgment to come. *This* is the true spiritual Jordan: in *this* you may "wash and be clean" from the leprosy of sin. Let not the great swelling waves of Abana and Pharpar carry you away beyond Babylon "Wash in the pool of Siloam, and be whole."



THE CHURCH ON EARTH, THE APPOINTED WAY TO THE HEAVENLY CHURCH.

PART II.

BY

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PREBENDARY OF LINCOLN, RECTOR OF BLUNHAM, BEDS, AND CHAPLAIN
TO THE LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

MATTHEW XV. 13.

*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted
shall be rooted up.*

THESE words of our blessed Saviour were directed against the "*traditions*" of the Jews, by which, in his time, they had "made the Word of God of no effect;" so that their religious services were no longer acceptable; "in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men." If therefore any Church is guilty of the same practices, superseding dutiful obedience to the laws of God by ceremonial observances, and setting their own "*traditions*" upon a footing with *his* Word, or even exalting them above it; *that* Church, unquestionably becomes subject to the same censure, liable to the same punishment, and can only be saved by timely "*reformation*."

This is a principle of vital importance to *us*. For if the reformation of our Church in England was not rendered absolutely necessary by the corrupt traditions, and superstitious practices, imposed upon it by the usurping tyranny of the Bishop of Rome; if it was not justified by plain warrant of the Word of God, and by the true and

faithful traditions of the universal Church, then, indeed, the Papists have *some* colour for their charge against us of a wanton separation from their communion; and we are not clearly free from the guilt of schism. For although it be undeniably true that the Church of England never did willingly withdraw itself from the communion of the Church of Rome, but, on the contrary, was forcibly cut off from it by overt acts of excommunication, and by an interdict; still, if we gave cause, or even *pretext*, for those schismatical acts by any *needless* deviations from ancient practice and wholesome ordinances, we are, in part at least, blameable for the separation which ensued.

Now, since no schismatical member of the body *can* be in communion with the head of the Church, the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and consequently is out of the way of salvation, it is essential to our peace of mind, and to our Scriptural assurance, to be satisfied that the Church to which we belong, and through which we claim to be united to our Redeemer, is not in any degree tainted with the deadly sin of schism; of which the primitive Fathers affirm, that the blood of martyrdom cannot expiate it; not meaning to attribute any atoning efficacy or merit to martyrdom, but that *no* proof, not the *highest*, of sincerity, can excuse the sin.

In order to make this plain, it will be necessary to trace, in few words, the origin, progress, and reformation of the Church of England; to show that the traditions of the Romish Church had become subversive of true doctrine and holy practice: and that our rejection of them was carried on in a Christian and Catholic spirit, with a sincere desire to avoid any violation of Catholic unity. I shall, with your patience, proceed to prove these points as briefly as possible.

It appears probable that the universal Church of

CHRIST was extended into this country, if not by some of the Apostles themselves, at least by apostolical men in their times (for Irenæus, in the second century, speaks of the Church in Britain as one of the established Churches of Christendom); and it flourished in a pure spiritual condition, notwithstanding its many temporal reverses, until the country was overrun by the heathen Saxons, who founded the Heptarchy. But, although the Christian Church in these realms was sorely wasted and persecuted by our Pagan ancestors at that period, it was at no time extinct; so far from it, that, in the worst times of the Heptarchy, we read of synods of numerous bishops, with their principal clergy, meeting to deliberate on the perplexed and dangerous condition of their affairs.

At that period the Church of Rome, and its Patriarch or Pope, though fallen from the purity of primitive days, had not adopted the soul-destroying abominations of later times, and were still entitled to reverence for their maintenance of the Christian faith throughout the world. And it was highly laudable in the Pope to send the Bishop Augustine to England to convert the heathen Saxons, and restore the country to Christendom. That bishop executed his perilous task with apostolical zeal and success; but, it appears, without due regard to the rights of the existing British Church; and hence arose unhappy jealousies between the new and the old bishops, the former desiring to bring the whole island under the control of their own Patriarch, the latter resolutely maintaining the independence of their Church, and the equality of their episcopal powers. These differences, however, were not of very long continuance; the country gradually became Christian; and the remains of the ancient British spirit, incorporated in the Saxon Church, preserved it from servile submission to Papal arrogance,

and from ready adoption of Papal superstitions; so that up to the time of the Norman conquest, the Church of England was distinguished by purity of faith, by holiness of life, and by the zeal and learning of its ministry.

It has indeed been usual in this self-conceited, arrogant generation, (as Hooker expresses it, "full of tongue, and weak of brain,") to style that bright period of the Anglican Church, "the dark ages!" But if the men, who thus hastily condemn their forefathers, had sufficient learning to read, and intellect to appreciate the laborious records of those "*dark ages*," they would know that a truer light then shone upon the world than has ever yet visited their own shallow understandings.

With the Normans, however, came in the reign of papal superstition and corruption, imported, like other moral plagues, from France! Not that the monstrous fabric of Popery was reared at once by our Norman ancestors; far from it; the purity of British doctrine, the integrity of British principles, the sturdy independence of British spirit, long withstood the rising tide of innovation, and protracted to a late period the domination of Romish usurpation, and the prevalence of Romish idolatry!

It is a maxim admitted by all sober-minded Christians, that nothing can excuse resistance to the "powers that be, which are ordained of God," short of the effectual plea of the Apostles, "We ought to obey God, rather than man;" and if this principle be true, as undoubtedly it is, with respect to the temporal powers of the State, and necessary as a preservative against the crime of rebellion, it is still more awfully binding upon the consciences of men with reference to the spiritual powers of the Church; so that sincere Christians will bear with many things which they know to be inexpedient, and

erroneous, in the practice and doctrine of their Church, rather than incur any risk of the dreadful sin of schism.

But when the Church not only admits, but enforces, and *that* too with the power of the civil sword, and with violence of persecution, practices, and doctrines clearly repugnant to the Word of God, it becomes a duty to refuse obedience to such practices, and assent to such doctrines, though still without the act of withdrawing from its communion; and if the authorities of the Church proceed to excommunicate, or otherwise to exclude the members who thus peaceably protest against its abominations, the sin of separation is with those who exercise so unjust an oppression.

If this be the rule with respect to individuals (and it is notoriously the rule upon which Luther, and Melancthon, and all the really pious Reformers acted,) it applies still more manifestly to the case of national churches, which are certainly only members of the Catholic Church of CHRIST, and bound by all fair means and lawful concessions to continue in its communion.

Let us now examine briefly the Reformation of the Church of England upon this principle. We do not deny that the Church of Rome is entitled to a certain precedence among the Churches, and that its Patriarch might fairly claim precedence in an œcumenical council of Bishops*; and this rank was generally allowed to it from a very early period. But since all Bishops in the Church of CHRIST have, or ought to have, the same spiritual jurisdiction in their own dioceses, and that Patriarchs, or Popes, or Archbishops, are merely presidents in synods and general assemblies of the episcopal

* Ad hanc Ecclesiam, propter potiore principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam.—IRENÆUS. The *precedency* is on *temporal* grounds.

body, we do utterly deny the right of the Church of Rome to call herself the mother and mistress of all Churches, and we repudiate the usurped jurisdiction of the Pope, and his assumed title of Universal Bishop; maintaining, as Protestants, that his power as a Bishop ought to be confined to his own diocese, and his authority as Patriarch or Pope to the assemblies in which he presides.

But previous to the time of the Reformation, the Pope of Rome not only assumed the title and authority of Universal Bishop, superseding the just and legitimate functions of our English Bishops; but he also usurped a tyrannous power over the whole Church and State, pretending a divine right to depose kings, to absolve subjects from their allegiance, "to change times and laws," to tax all kinds of property, to interfere with all patronage, to interdict the whole kingdom from public worship and the means of grace, and to suspend and alter all the laws of God and man.

And the use which the Popes made of this prodigious power was worse still. Doctrines and practices utterly repugnant to Holy Scripture, utterly subversive of true faith and holiness of life, were enforced upon the Church under the severest pains and penalties; so that conscientious Christians were burnt at the stake for refusing to commit idolatry, or to declare their assent to doctrines wholly irreconcilable with those of the Gospel. The worship of the Virgin Mary, the invocation of saints, the adoration of images and relics, the belief in transubstantiation, and in the efficacy of penances, pilgrimages, and indulgences,—purchased indulgences!—are only a few of the abominations which the usurped authority of the Romish Bishop had forced upon the Church of England!

But the Church of England did not, on this account, *separate itself* from the Church of Rome, nor from any part of the Catholic body. The Church of England protested against the tyranny of Rome, and denied the Pope's jurisdiction in England. The Church of England then proceeded to reform abuses, to amend defects, to purify its worship, its formularies, its articles, its whole form and discipline, from the rankness of Popish corruption. The Church of England appealed to the true and primitive "*traditions*" of the Catholic Church, against the *modern* and false "*traditions*" of the Church of Rome; and declared that *no tradition can* have any force, or be binding on the consciences of men, unless it be consonant to Holy Scripture; that the right use of "*tradition*" is *not to add* anything to the Word of God, but to explain and interpret it according to the judgment of the Universal Church.

But the Church of England separated herself from no communion with other churches, excluded no church from her own communion, committed no act of schism. On the contrary, the English Romanists, and the whole body of the nation, continued in one communion for many years, although the Pope fulminated *his* excommunications and his interdict against the whole kingdom; and, failing by this to recover his dominion, threw among us the fire-brand of schism.

He commanded all whom he called "faithful Catholics," (under pain of excommunication) to withdraw themselves from the communion and worship of the Reformed Church, and thus to commit an act of open schism by separating from the apostolic Church of CHRIST established in their own country; and he sent over a number of prelates, priests, and Jesuits, who intruded themselves into the dioceses of the English

Bishops and the parishes of the English clergy, and who continue to this day *a sect* bringing in pestilent heresies and subverting unstable souls.

But this formal act of *schism*, thus instigated by the unprincipled Church of Rome, did not take place till the eleventh year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, A.D. 1570, forty years after the jurisdiction of the Pope had been abolished in these kingdoms by Act of Parliament; and, in the meanwhile, the whole body of the people had quietly conformed to the Reformation, and frequented their parish churches. The evil example once set, and those persons who disapproved of the Reformation having been seduced to adopt separate worship and a separate ministry, others who thought that the reforms of the Church had not gone far enough, soon took the same liberty, the consciences of men became blinded to the crying sin of *schism*, and Protestants as well as Papists were divided into *sects*, and remain so to this day.

The Apostolic Church, amid all these storms and rude attacks, preserved a wise moderation; avoiding all wanton changes, rejecting no ancient custom, except such as had been proved liable to abuse or tended to idolatry; reverencing all the canons and traditions of the Primitive Church, as the true guides to a right interpretation of Holy Scripture; acknowledging the authority of the primitive and genuine General Councils; retaining the Creeds promulgated by the Fathers; and maintaining that "Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, *nor may be proved thereby*, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation*."

* Art. VI.

The Church of England does not reject *primitive tradition*, but confines it to its proper office as the interpreter of Scripture, affirming that "The Church *hath* authority in controversies of faith*." The Church of Rome gives to *tradition*, *her own modern tradition*, an authority equal to that of Scripture itself, so that doctrines supported by *tradition alone*, *may be*, and *are* with *them*, articles of faith.

It was long before any sect gathered courage to deny altogether the authority of *tradition* in its proper use and acceptance; but in our days men have gone the length of refusing all submission to the authority of any interpreter of Scripture whatever, and of contending that every man has a right to judge for himself in what sense the Word of God is to be received!—a claim manifestly preposterous unless accompanied by a claim to direct inspiration! and clearly inconsistent with all commentaries, all expounding, all teaching and preaching of the ministry!

Between these extremes the ancient Apostolic Church of this country took its stand at the Reformation; and on this ground its champions still maintain the conflict against the *Popish sect* on one hand, and the innumerable, ever-varying *sects of Protestant denominations* on the other. But *the Church alone* can make any *effectual* resistance to Popery; since it is by *primitive tradition only* that the corruptions of Rome can be shown to be of modern date. They who altogether reject *tradition* are not in a condition to refute the assertion of the Papists that *theirs* is the old religion from the beginning, *theirs* the original Church. *We* appeal to the Primitive Fathers, to the creeds and canons of the primitive Church;

* Art. XX.

and *we shew*, to demonstration, that no *part* of the doctrine or discipline of the Romish Church which *we* have reformed, was held or observed, according to their practice, in primitive times; *we prove* that the corruptions of Popery which we have cleansed away, were directly or indirectly censured by the primitive Fathers, when introduced among the various bodies of heretics.

This is one main use of *tradition*; to establish Protestant principles on sufficient evidence, and on unassailable grounds. It is commonly said that this may be amply done by means of the Bible. But they who use this language forget that their opponents admit the authority of Holy Scripture as well as themselves; and that if the Bible is to be regarded as the *sole* means of teaching and proving the truth, then all other means, all preaching and expounding, the Church and the Ministry, are superfluous.

The Bible, being the undoubted work of the HOLY SPIRIT, *must* be, and is *perfect* for all the purposes to which God designed it. It cannot be regarded with too awful a reverence, too dutiful an affection. But it was *not* intended to supersede the use of those other means of propagating gospel truth, which God himself also ordained. It was *not* given to render the Church nugatory, nor the Ministry useless.

If then we would really be members of this Church, and profit by our membership in it, we must take the Bible as the foundation of all saving doctrine, and as containing *all* that God requires of us, whether of faith or practice, in order to our salvation.

But learning from our Lord himself, and his Apostles, that essential points of doctrine are *intimated* in Holy Scripture rather than plainly revealed; and that others can only be rightly understood by a painful, labo-

rious, patient, and skilful investigation, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" learning, too, that God has appointed the visible Church to be "the pillar and ground of the truth," the authorized interpreter of his most Holy Word; and that the Lord has promised to be with his Church, "always, even to the end of the world;" we must admit the *traditions* of the *universal* Church of CHRIST,—mark me,—*not* the *traditions* of the Church of Rome, *not* those of any particular Church,—but the *traditions*, the *creeds*, the *Articles of Faith* of the *universal* Church, the *Catholic Church properly so called*, to be our guides to a right understanding of our Bibles, and a true apprehension of the Christian faith.

These plants can never be rooted up, since our Heavenly Father himself planted them; these means of salvation can never fail, since JESUS CHRIST himself ordained them; the Apostolic Church and Ministry can never cease to bear testimony to the truth, since the HOLY SPIRIT brings all things to their remembrance which our Saviour taught his Apostles.

But how does the HOLY GHOST remind the Church of these things? Inspiration is no more; miracles have ceased; visions and revelations have long since come to an end. There remains but one way; and this is THE TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH; *not* the vague, unauthorized, varying expositions of uninspired men; but the unchangeable doctrine of the universal Church, settled from the beginning, and to be maintained unaltered to the end. If we depart from "the old paths" thus ordained for us to walk in, we can have no safe guidance, no settled opinions, no sure hope; we must be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; and at last become mere "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

But if we profess, as most of us do, that we are seriously attached to the Catholic Church, and duly sensible of the value of its ark amid the deluge of sin and folly in which the world is drowned; if so, why is it that so few of us are at the pains to learn its constitution, to know the grounds of its claims, or even the doctrines which it teaches?

It would sound strangely to say to a professed member of the Church of England, zealous in its cause, "Have you ever read and considered the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and compared them with Holy Scripture?" And still more strangely would sound the reply, which I fear is not unlikely to be made, "I leave those things *to the Clergy!*"

Not that this arises from any undue reverence for the Clergy, any servile submission to the judgment of the Church! *No*—but from sheer negligence, and indifference to the subject!

But the time is at hand when this unconsidered mode of adopting creeds and denominations *must* be abandoned. You *must* "search the Scriptures whether those things be so;" you *must* "*prove all things, and hold fast that which is good;*" you *must* be able to "render to every man a reason for the hope that is in you." If you *will not* be at the pains so to qualify yourselves as steady, consistent, enlightened members of the Catholic Church of CHRIST, reformed, in this country, by the pure spirit of the Protestant faith, you must either be absorbed into the vortex of Popish superstition and idolatry, or carried away, like chaff, by the tempestuous winds of schism and infidelity. People "perish for lack of knowledge,"—of solid knowledge in the Scriptures, and in the doctrines of the Reformation. They seek to understand everything except their religion. How unlike the spirit of St. Paul, when

that deeply learned Apostle exclaimed, "I have determined to know nothing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and *Him crucified.*"

May that spirit yet be bestowed upon the members of our true Apostolical Church! May we all become impressed with the vital importance of sound Scriptural knowledge! May we all resolve to devote a serious portion of our time to learning "the things which belong to our peace, before they are hid from our eyes!"

May the HOLY SPIRIT grant us all "light to discern our duty and grace to perform it!"

ON CONFIRMATION.

BY

WILLIAM STEPHEN GILLY, D.D.,

CANON OF DURHAM, AND VICAR OF NORHAM.

DEUTERONOMY XXVI. 17, 18.

Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as He hath promised thee.

THE passage from which my text is taken, describes a solemn declaration, which the chosen people of God were required to make, to remind them of their duty to God, and of God's promises to them.

We are to remember that God's people are not *his* as individuals only, but as members of a family, of a nation, or a church; they are his in a covenanted relation. "For thy father Abraham's sake," and "for my name's sake," saith the LORD, I will bless thee. "As touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." If it was necessary of old, it is still necessary to those who value helps to devotion, and especially those helps which correspond with the precepts and promises recorded in Scripture, that declarations of fidelity to the Divine Law should be made as public acts of confession, before the assembled multitude. On the occasion to which I refer, all the tribes of Israel were present before the LORD, and the imagination can scarcely reach the awfulness of that solemnity, and the grandeur of that scene, which were enjoined in order that a deep and

a lasting impression might be made on the minds of the worshippers. By taking a part in the ceremonial, every Israelite, who avouched the LORD to be his GOD on that day, openly professed himself to be the servant and the worshipper of JEHOVAH, and desirous of keeping his commandments. He was a witness, and he was witnessed against: he testified for others, and for himself, and they for him: and they were all under a covenant together, and were bound by one common engagement, as individuals and as an elect people, to walk obediently in the statutes of GOD.

And the LORD himself, condescending to be bound by the same covenant, avowed himself to be their GOD, their protector, and their portion, and promised to enrich them with his blessings, so long as they should hearken unto his voice.

Now, my brethren, is our admiration of such a solemnity to be a mere matter of sentiment and talk, which is to affect us for the moment, and then to be forgotten, like transient impressions made by tales of fancy? Or, are we to regard the sacred narrative as one of those passages of Scripture, which are recorded for our reproof and correction, and instruction in righteousness? Most assuredly we must receive it as one of those descriptions, which are recorded to make us wise unto salvation. The scene, when all Israel avouched the LORD to be their GOD, and ratified their vows of obedience before Him, was a figure of that covenant-relation, which subsists between a reconciled GOD and a true believer in JESUS CHRIST; and of the privileges and the duties belonging to such a condition.

The families of CHRIST now bring their young people, in like manner, to make their vows before the LORD and the congregation, believing that the covenant between

the Redeemer and them requires such a public declaration of faith and obedience; and that it is part of a parent's wisdom and duty to see, that his children avouch the LORD to be their GOD, in the face of the Church and of the assembled witnesses, with such circumstances of prayer and exhortation, as may awaken and deepen feelings of piety. We make no hesitation in pronouncing that those persons who make light of the solemnity, which it is our duty to urge upon your attention, betray an ignorance of a threefold character:—

I. Ignorance of human nature.

II. Ignorance of the word of GOD.

III. Ignorance of the true nature of that rite, which we call Confirmation.

I. First: they who make light of the solemnity betray ignorance of human nature.

Brethren, we are by nature so infirm and corrupt, so weak and wicked, such aliens from GOD, and so estranged from Him, that we require every means of grace that can be used to improve our spiritual condition. Whatever is offered to us by way of help, to put us in mind of the atonement, to stir us up, to draw us nearer to GOD in JESUS CHRIST, to move our better affections, to recall us to a sense of our duty, and of our thankfulness to ALMIGHTY GOD, and to act upon us as a remembrancer, is beneficial in the highest degree; and he knows nothing of the strings by which the human heart is moved, and of the channels by which health and strength are conveyed to the drooping soul, who undervalues a solemnity, in which so many powerful aids are brought to bear upon the infirmities and corruptions of our fallen nature. For what are your days of meeting, and of commemoration upon ordinary occasions? For what are the anniversaries of your political, scientific, or benefit societies? and for

what are the pledges, and the professions which are exacted on those occasions, but to give force and consistency to fellowship, and to promote union and fidelity among the members of the several associations to which you belong? Now, is the Christian *society*, is the Church, is the body of members whose symbol is the cross, whose profession is obedience to the laws of their Redeemer, is this society of so much less importance than those other societies, to which I have alluded, that it alone is to be without its memorials and its ratifications? Does the Church want no solemn inquiries, no examination of its members, no protestations before the public of vows to be observed, and of promises to be fulfilled? Is it so *easy* for a young Christian to keep his sacred engagements, that he wants none of those helps which the common forgetfulness and weaknesses of our nature require in other cases, to stir him up, and to remind him of his duties?

Yes, verily, human nature in its relations with God and the Church, stands in need of every help from observances calculated to admonish the wavering and to strengthen the feeble; and he is totally ignorant of, or regardless of this truth, who does not recognize the advantages of a ceremonial, like that of Confirmation, even upon the lowest grounds of propriety and expediency.

II. Secondly, we say, that to make light of it betrays an ignorance of the word of God.

The word of God contains nothing superfluous; the principle of every precept in Holy Writ is, like God himself, everlasting; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Hence, although it is not necessary for us to abide by the letter of the regulations, which governed the patriarchal Church and the Israelitish Church, yet the

spirit of them is for the guidance of every nation and people under heaven.

Thus one day in seven, though not the *seventh* day, is necessary for a day of holy rest. Thus also a place of worship, though not *the Temple*, and a gathering together of the people before the LORD, are enjoined, though not according to the ritual of the Hebrew legislator. Upon this principle too, the word of GOD still requires that we should, on solemn occasions, avouch the LORD to be our GOD, and profess our covenanted relation to Him; that we should present our children before the LORD, and teach them to make a public declaration of the Christian vows and promises, by which they were bound at baptism. Three times a year all the sons of the descendants of Jacob, GOD's chosen race and elect people, were to assemble in holy convocation before the LORD. "*Thither*," speaking of Jerusalem, "*thither*," said the Psalmist, "the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD." JESUS did this himself, as the child JESUS, when he was but twelve years old! and JESUS, the man JESUS, the son of GOD, the Holy One of Israel, Emmanuel, or GOD with us, did it every year during his ministry upon earth, though He came to establish a new dispensation.

His Apostles did the same, even after the institution of the Church of CHRIST. Thus Peter at the festival of the Passover, and Paul on the day of Pentecost, went up to Jerusalem, unto the testimony of Israel. Hence we learn that the principle of avouching the LORD to be our GOD, and of declaring our obedience to his commandments at some stated time, is of everlasting sanctity and continuance, and they only make light of it who are ignorant of the Word of GOD. For who are so pious, so settled, so established in the faith, so free from the

obligation of ordinances, that they need not observe religious ordinances, such as God's elect observed?

III. Our third allegation is, that they are ignorant of the true nature of Confirmation who neglect it. You must, therefore, be prepared with answers in reply to those, who misrepresent that which they do not understand; and by God's help I hope to enable you to contradict those erroneous statements, which are too often given and received, in regard to this ordinance. Such is the wickedness and the weakness of our nature, that whenever any good thing is enjoined to diminish the amount of sin, and to help our infirmities, and to stir up the life of God within us, the Evil Spirit promotes opposition to it, and employs the enmity of some, and the ignorance of others, to give false notions of solemnities, which are useful and edifying as means of grace.

"It has been the lot of the sacred rite of confirmation," said Bishop Hall, "to fall into ill hands, and to be foully wronged by a double extreme: the one of *excess*, the other of *defect*. The *excess* in a superstitious overdoing and overvaluing it; the *defect* in a neglectful disestimation, both of which must be clearly evicted, ere we can present this holy ordinance to the beholder in its native beauty and perfection*."

Some people, being deceived or ignorant, are led to imagine that our Bishops undertake to give the HOLY SPIRIT at confirmation, as if by the imposition of their hands they had it in their power to bestow spiritual gifts. Examine the Service or Order of Confirmation, the books and tracts† which we circulate, especially that entitled

* BISHOP HALL on *The Imposition of Hands*, section 3.

† "Though our Church teaches us to regard the laying on of the Bishop's hands only as 'a sign' intended 'to certify the confirmed of the favour and gracious goodness of God towards them,' without

A Companion to the Office of Confirmation, and you will find that the Bishop offers up a prayer, and beseeches GOD "to strengthen his servants or his children with the HOLY GHOST the Comforter." He does not profess to confer spiritual gifts, "as if he challenged any power," to use again the words of Bishop Hall, "by an inherent virtue in himself, but only in an humble way of impetration, by his faithful prayers, which are the life of the ceremony," he implores the LORD to grant them*.

Another mistake of wickedness or ignorance is, that before confirmation the baptized child does not bear the burden of his own sins: that, either he is not answerable for his guilt, or that his godfathers and godmothers, as his sponsors, must bear the blame. There is not one word in any of our services or expositions, either in our Baptismal Office, in our Catechism, or in our Order of Confirmation, which can authorize such an error. Scripture is decidedly opposed to it. Idolatry, as defined in the second commandment, is the only sin punished in the children unto the third and fourth generation. Holy Writ teaches us that "the soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him†." That which

asserting that the HOLY GHOST is thereby positively conferred; still we cannot hesitate to believe that as our ordinary prayers and intercessions are means of grace to ourselves and others, so in a more especial manner are the prayers of the Church and of the Bishop effectual to procure the ordinary gifts and graces of his Spirit to them who 'ask in faith, nothing wavering.'"—*A Method of Preparation for Confirmation*, by W. HALE HALE, M.A. Printed for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

* "No one," said a Bishop of ancient times, "no one, not even one of CHRIST's disciples, gave the HOLY SPIRIT, but they prayed that he would come upon those on whom they laid their hands."—AUGUSTINE, *De Trin.*, 15, 46.

† Ezek. xviii. 20.

the sponsors have to bear is this, the penalty of their own negligence, if they do not see that the children, for whom they answer at baptism, be instructed in Christian knowledge and duty. They volunteer to undertake that the child be taught, so soon as he is able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he hath made by them: and if they do not fulfil their engagements it is said to them, as it is said to other unfaithful watchmen, in the Word of GOD, "Because thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way,—the same shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thine hand*."

If confirmation be not the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, conferred at the will of the Bishop, as his own prerogative, by the laying on of his hands; and if it be not, on the part of the confirmed, a taking upon themselves their own sins, which they had not to bear before, but which were on the shoulders of their sponsors or parents, what then is confirmation?

Confirmation is a rite or ceremony derived from the example of the Apostles and the primitive Church, "whereby" (to use the language of our Church, as it is set forth in that part of our service-book called the "Order of Confirmation,") "whereby persons who have been baptized, and who have come to years of discretion, and have learnt what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them, do with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church ratify and confirm the same; and also promise that by the grace of GOD they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to *observe* such things, as they by their own confession have assented unto." The word *confirmation* in this solemnity has a

* Ezek. iii. 18.

double meaning. It means that, the baptized Christian makes a new and deliberate declaration of his faith and hope, and of his sincere desire to practise what he professes, and receives a confirmed assurance of the divine blessing. It means that, before witnesses, and in the presence of one authorized to receive his vows, he pledges himself to be a true believer and a faithful servant of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. And is he not more likely to be received by others as a Christian, and to act as a Christian, after thus solemnly pledging himself, than if he did it not? For consider the vows which he makes unto the LORD, and the prayers which he offers unto GOD, and the invocation of the HOLY SPIRIT, which he and GOD's minister the Bishop, and GOD's people the congregation, unite in making, and then ask yourselves, is he not thereby brought more forcibly to a sense of his responsibility before GOD, and of his deep obligation to his Saviour, the Lord who bought him, and of his duty to his fellow-creatures, the Redeemed of the LORD, than if all this were left undone?

But there is another meaning of the word confirmation. The Lord of Life, the GOD and Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, ratifies his covenanted promises, and engages to pour out his Holy Spirit upon occasions like these; for JEHOVAH has stipulated to avouch and confirm his promises to us, when we avouch and confirm our duty to Him. The Bishop lays his hand upon the heads of those, who take their part in this solemnity, to certify them by that sign of GOD's favour and gracious goodness to them, and the Bishop's prayer for the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and of true godliness, will assuredly be heard, if they will be as devoted to GOD as GOD is loving and merciful towards them; if

they will seek GOD's face in supplication, and in acts of faith and obedience.

Taking these definitions of the word confirmation together, we say that persons thus brought before the Bishop, and strengthened in their pious resolutions by his prayers and imposition of hands, are placed in covenant with GOD, and are confirmed by the sanctification of the HOLY GHOST and an increase of divine grace. For a larger measure of the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, than was bestowed by the Patriarchal and Mosaic covenant, is the Christian's distinction; and it is the privilege and peculiarity of the Church to be instrumental in imparting or conveying it, according to prescribed rules: for which reason the ministers of the New Testament are said to exercise "the ministration of the SPIRIT," and the ordinance of which I am speaking is one of the means thereof.

I have said that this rite or ceremony of confirmation is derived from the example of the Apostles, and the practice of the primitive Church. We will now examine this part of our subject. "The ancient custom of the Church was, after they had baptized, to add thereunto imposition of hands, with effectual prayer for the illumination of GOD's most HOLY SPIRIT, to confirm and perfect that which the grace of the same SPIRIT had already begun by baptism*." Such is Hooker's testimony.

We do not, however, mean to say, that our ordinance of confirmation, in its several forms and solemnities, has an exact counterpart in what was done by the Apostles, and corresponds precisely with a religious service performed in the first age of Christianity. We do not say this, but we venture to affirm, that in the cha-

* See *Ecclesiastical Polity*, v. 66.

acter of the ceremony, in its principles and object, and in some of its details, we draw our practice from patterns laid down in Scripture.

The action of laying hands on the heads of young persons, and of others dedicating themselves to God's service, is traced up through the Apostolic and Mosaic dispensations to the Patriarchal times. Jacob laid his hands on the two sons of Joseph, when he blessed them. Jesus laid his hands upon the young children when He blessed them. Peter and John laid their hands on the converts of Samaria, when they invoked the HOLY SPIRIT; and St. Paul speaks frequently of the manner in which benedictions were uttered, and holy feelings stirred up, by the laying on of hands.

For this action, then, for this grave and affectionate form of praying for a blessing, we have the most sacred examples that can be adduced; and we find that blessings so invoked by persons, who had a character of holiness, or an office of authority, have been reverentially and sincerely valued at all periods of sacred history. In this part of the ceremony of Confirmation, therefore, we are justified by the practices recorded and sanctioned in Scripture. Nor will the humble believer doubt that the intercession of a Chief Minister of the Church, "whom God regardeth for that place and calling, which bindeth him above others to this duty*," pleading in behalf of persons earnestly desiring to perform their baptismal vows, and to receive the baptismal promises, will be received at the throne of Grace; and that the HOLY SPIRIT, who answered the invocation of Peter and John at Samaria, and of Paul at Ephesus, will bestow his gifts in such proportion as is necessary on the occasion.

* HOOKER.

That a ministration, resembling our Order of Confirmation in *other respects*, for example, in bringing new converts and young persons, ready to fulfil their baptismal vows, into the presence of rulers and officers of the Church, is also to be traced to the practice of the Apostles; that the Apostles *went from place to place* to receive the religious declarations of persons professing Christianity, and to ascertain the truth and sincerity of their faith, and to confirm them in it,—this, too, is made manifest by the historical documents of Holy Scripture.

Not only did Peter and John, as I before observed, go to Samaria for this purpose, but we find Barnabas going to Antioch to make inquiries and to exhort the Christians there to cleave unto the LORD with purpose of heart, and we find Paul and Barnabas visiting the Churches of Asia and *confirming* the souls of the disciples. Laying hands on the brethren, receiving them into communion with the Church, after they had been baptized, and testifying to this purpose with the solemnities of prayer and praise, was so incontrovertibly an Apostolical observance, that we cannot but consider ourselves as under Scriptural guidance, when we model our Ordinance of Confirmation, as nearly as possible, after such venerable rules and examples; moreover, it is beyond all doubt that the rite has been observed in the Christian Church through all successive ages, beginning with that which followed the primitive age.

“Let us go on unto perfection,” says St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews*, and then he writes in the the same sentence, “of the doctrine of baptism, and the laying on of hands.”

It was this passage in the New Testament, which

* Heb., chap. vi. 1, 2.

constrained the celebrated Presbyterian Reformer, Calvin, to admit that infant baptism, and the rite of confirmation, have existed from the very times of the Apostles. "The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews," said Calvin, "connects the imposition of hands with baptism, because as there were two classes of catechumens, so was the ceremony also two-fold. For those who were from without (meaning those born of heathen parents) did not come to baptism without first declaring their profession of faith. In them, therefore, catechetical instruction used to precede baptism, but the children of the faithful, since they were adopted from the womb, and belonged by right of promise to the body of the Church, *were baptized while infants; yet these also, after their infancy was past, and they had been brought up in the faith, offered themselves for catechetical instruction, which, in their case, was thus subsequent to baptism. Recourse, however, was then had to another symbol, 'the laying on of hands.'*" This single passage," he continues, "abundantly proves that this ceremony, as to its origin, flowed from the Apostles, though afterwards it was perverted into superstition by the Romanists." Such was Calvin's testimony to the apostolical origin of confirmation*; but *we* do not abuse it to superstition, for *we* do not elevate it to the rank of a sacrament, nor assign to it any other virtue, than that which proceeds from the influence of a very solemn ordinance on the conscience and faith of the individual.

And now, brethren, judge ye, have we not the authority of Scripture, have we not the example of CHRIST'S Apostles, and the practice of the primitive Church for

* See *A Father's Letters to his Son, on the Apostolic Rite of Confirmation*, by J. ENDELL TYLER, D.D.

this ordinance? Is there any ground for discontinuing it? Is the virtue of an apostolical ordinance diminished? Is it not a solemn, ancient, and laudable custom, in the Church of God, that young persons and others, who have not yet done so, should, after due instruction and preparation, present themselves before the LORD, and the congregation, to renew the awful vows made in their name at baptism, to ratify and confirm the same in their own persons, to acknowledge themselves bound to believe in the Christian doctrines, and to practise the Christian duties? And is it not an impressive and a heart-moving scene, to behold a chief ruler of the Church praying over them and blessing them,—to see, and to hear a devout assembly of parents, and relations, and witnesses, taking their part in the ceremony, attesting the declarations made, and uniting in supplication to the throne of Grace, that the confirmed may sanctify the LORD GOD in their hearts; and that the GOD of all grace, who hath called them unto his eternal glory by JESUS CHRIST, may make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle them.

This is our explanation of Confirmation, and of a spiritual service of the Church, which we would have you devoutly value and reverence. In Confirmation a confession of faith is made, and a prayer is offered up for the blessing of the HOLY SPIRIT. Without Him none can be effectually baptized. Without Him, none having made their baptismal vows *can understand them*; and none having *confirmed* their baptismal vows can *keep them* *. Is it not indispensable, then, that we should invoke Him with every circumstance of outward reverence, seriousness, and solemnity; and that we should

* See *Wonston Confirmation Tracts*.

adhere to an ordinance, in which such helps to devotion are most expressively employed? Yea, and with the blessing of God we will persevere in commending it to the veneration of our flocks, as a means by which our children may be seasoned with the principles of true religion, before malice and corrupt example deprave their minds,—by which the seed of the Church may be preserved sincere and sound,—and by which we may behold the first beginnings of true godliness even in tender years*!

* HOOKER.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY

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ST. LUKE XVIII. 10.

*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee,
and the other a Publican.*

EITHER Pharisees or Publicans, brethren, we all are in the sight of GOD; we are all of us one or other of the two characters which are described by these types, (as we may consider them) not of two individuals, but of those two classes of men into which the whole human family may be divided. In meditating, therefore, on the deeply-interesting Parable which has been read to you in the Gospel for the day, we need not confine our attention to the self-commending Pharisee and the self-condemning Publican of our Saviour's time. They were striking characters, it is true, and formed a strong contrast with each other; and we witness in the Parable the matchless wisdom of our great Teacher, who in a few masterly sentences not only mortified the pride of the haughty spirits around him, and not only "revived the hearts" of a then despised body of men; but also unfolded the workings of human nature, and the workings of divine grace, throughout all nations and in all ages of our world, even unto the end of time. Still, it is not the imagery of the Parable, so much as its spirit, on which I would have you to reflect at present; a subject,

permit me to say, of the highest order in religion, and of the most vital importance to every one of us. If we open our Bibles, and read and reflect upon these six verses, oh! how dull must our minds be, how dead must be our hearts, if we do not see and feel that here we have the deep and serious matters of evil and of good, of Man's unregenerate nature and of God's quickening and renewing grace, set before us in the most interesting and instructive manner. God grant, my brethren, that all who are here present may duly appreciate the importance of this subject, and enter upon the consideration of it with listening ears and with understanding hearts!

I propose, in the first place, to submit to you two facts; and in the second place, to notice the wrong and the right course which men pursue with reference to those facts. Such is to be the order of my discourse.

I. First, I am to state two facts; and of these (1.) the first is, the existence in our world of good and evil, of truth and error, of holiness and sin. Where do we see good, and truth, and holiness? where shall we find them? We immediately reply, In God, in God's word, and in those Christians who love God, and hear his word and keep it. God is essentially good, and true, and holy; and if we know Him, and love Him, and obey Him as we ought, there is goodness—so far as human infirmity may admit of such approach unto perfection itself—there is goodness, truth, and holiness in *us*. And where, again, do we see evil, and error, and sin? Where shall we find these? We immediately reply, In all those among the children of Adam and inheritors of his perverseness, who disregard God and His commandments; who lean rather to their own understanding, are guided by their own

hearts, and ruled by their own maxims; whom our Saviour therefore describes as "children of the wicked one," whose deeds only will they do.

We know, indeed, of but three families of created beings: first, glorified spirits—whether angels who have "kept their first estate," or spirits of men, now by divine grace "made perfect" in righteousness—altogether good, enlightened, holy and happy beings: secondly, lost spirits, of whom it is enough to say that their portion is with the devil and his fallen angels, whom God "hath reserved," St. Jude informs us, "in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day:" and thirdly, the human race upon earth, who are yet in their probationary state of being. What shall we say, then, brethren, of our race with regard to good and evil, truth and error, holiness and sin? Oh! we may dislike to hear what we are, as seen by Him who "seeth not as man seeth;" we may prefer to listen to such prophets as will "speak unto us smooth things," even though they thereby "prophecy deceit;" we may love to be reminded of the dignity of human nature, and to dwell with much complacency on the works of righteousness that we ourselves have done; but after all, if we will deal truly with ourselves, we are sinful and corrupt creatures, "very far gone" (as our Church, in her Xth Article, describes us) "from Man's original righteousness," and of our own nature inclining only to evil. Yes, as compared with what *once* was the dignity of our race, when yet our first parents "walked with God," and were but "a little lower than the angels," we are all of us as blighted trees, as ruined palaces, as kings stripped of the robe and diadem which it was their birthright to wear. For what has not sin done? It has blinded our minds, it has secularised our hearts, it has sensualised our affec-

tions, it has stupified our consciences; it has "separated between us and our God," it has rendered us, in a word, "carnally-minded," and "to be carnally-minded," declares St. Paul, "is death;" "because," (he adds) "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

This is our first fact, which we cannot and ought not to wish to disguise from ourselves; evil exists around us, among us, and within us; we are pervaded by it. We need not enter into particulars, the fact is simply as we state it; and never may it be "hidden from our eyes!" The world in which we have, each of us, our term of trial, is an evil world; and every one of us, more or less, contributes to the amount and the continuance of that evil. And now we have to notice a second fact, which is this:—

(2.) A right apprehension of good and evil is essential to our welfare and our happiness.

We can hardly conceive, indeed, a state of absolute ignorance and indifference on this point, for we all have some apprehension or other, a right one or a wrong one, of our condition and character; and by this frame our conduct as to the present, and our hopes as to the future: and if we mistake in this matter, if we cherish false hopes, if we flatter ourselves that all is well with us, when in reality all is ill with us, can we doubt that the consequences must be awful? Right notions, then, of good and evil, and a just and scriptural estimate of ourselves in relation to both one and the other character, are plainly of the greatest importance to us as Christians. For, if we be blind and dead in trespasses and sin, if we "live the life that now is," as lords at best of the animal creation, not seeking the good which is our happiness and glory, and not shunning the evil which is our misery and disgrace, what will become of us in that eventful

day, when to those only who shall have "ordered their conversation aright," will the LORD in whom they have believed "show the salvation of God."

I quit this part of my subject, merely reminding you of what has thus far been advanced: first, that good and evil exist; next, that a right apprehension of good and evil lies at the root of all sound piety in Man. I look upon these as two great moral and spiritual truths, about which there cannot with any justice be the least dispute. And these, I may add, are truths of which every real Christian is deeply conscious, and which, in one way or other, are ever engaging his thoughts, and exciting his hopes and fears; so that we give a just idea of "a Christian indeed," when we say that "he is one who rightly apprehends the opposite characters and tendencies of good and evil, of truth and error, of holiness and sin." Read, as an illustration of this remark, the seventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and reflect more especially on the two concluding verses. "O wretched man that I am," he exclaims, "who shall deliver me from this body of death?" this slave, that is, of sin, "the wages of which is death." "I thank God," is the answer, "He will deliver me, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord." "So then," he concludes—and when he thus acquiesces in a state of internal conflict between the two opposite tendencies of his nature, his implied purpose is to support the better principle, and to "keep under his body and bring it into subjection"—"so then with the mind I myself serve the law of GOD, but with the flesh the law of sin."

II. The wrong and the right course which men pursue with regard to the facts that have been stated, is the point to which in the second place I ask your attention. And here it is that the Parable now before

us shines forth in all its clearness and all its fulness of instruction.

1. We will consider, firstly, the wrong course of proceeding in this matter. It is exemplified in the Parable by the language, spirit, and conduct of the Pharisee. All of you, beyond a doubt, censure and condemn him. But, as I have already said, he is only a type of our common nature, in one state and attitude in which men appear before their Maker. Our proper business, therefore, is to see that *we* be not found in this state and attitude; and, with this type before us, to “examine and prove our own selves.” In the character which our Divine Master has drawn, most probably from the life,—but say that it is imaginary, it matters not to our present purpose,—we see two painful features: first, (1.) a defect; the absence, namely, of a right apprehension of evil. I do not say that the Pharisee had no apprehension whatever of evil; for he speaks of evil characters, of “extortioners, unjust, adulterers.” Yes, brethren, he speaks of evil in others, but not a word says he, not a thought does he appear to entertain of evil in himself. Here is the sad omission. He comes into the courts of the LORD’s house, he engages in an act of worship, but he most clearly betrays that he was yet a stranger to himself; and how then should he pour out his heart before GOD in prayer? He knew, to a certain extent, the plague of “other men;” but he did not yet know his own plague, the sinfulness of his own heart and life. We read his statement—prayer it would be mockery to call it—and we refuse not to concede him all the praise which is due to his strict observance of the outward ordinances of his religion; we are willing to believe that his account of the “works of righteousness that he has done” is literally true. But then, if we

reflect a moment, we are compelled to say, "This man does not know himself, there is a great defect in his character, he is putting himself in a false position, and that in the very presence of his Maker."

What, then, was the defect in this Pharisee? Is not the answer plain? He had no such apprehension of the existence of evil in himself, as we have seen St. Paul had; no just sense of the corruption of his nature, no penitential view of the errors and offences of his life. He does not prostrate himself as a sinner, self-condemned before the throne of Grace. There is no confession,—no contrition, no tenderness of heart,—no sigh, no tear, no painful thought,—no anxious inquiry, like that which the Prophet Micah had suggested: "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No! in his own estimation, the Pharisee is (what of all that have been born of woman can truly be said of none but One,) "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The abject Publican, "standing afar off," reminds him that, "God be thanked, he is not as other men are!"

"Strange," we may say, "that a man should, on such an occasion, speak in such language, and in such a spirit!" But have we not here a type of our unregenerate, because unhumbled and unsanctified, nature? Is the Pharisee of eighteen centuries ago the only man who sees the sins of others, but does not see his own? who can use strong terms in describing the wickedness of those whom he sees about him, but has no humiliating

word whereby to describe himself? who congratulates himself that he (thank God!) is not as his neighbours are; and thence concludes that sin or evil is, in fact, a thing with which he has no personal concern? My brethren, in the house, and in the awful presence of our God, let us not be such self-deceivers! We make our formal confession, doubtless, that we are sinners,—but is it on our bended knees, in the stillness of that chamber where “He that heareth prayer” alone is present with us? or is it only when we go with the multitude of believers to engage in stated Sabbath offerings of prayer, and thanksgiving, and praise? Is it, again, from the heart, and under a deep sense of our own sinfulness, that we make our humble confession to ALMIGHTY GOD? or is it because we confess and deny not, but are at all times ready to confess, that “there is no man that sinneth not;” and that “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?” Ah! my brethren, such a vague, cold, general admission of an undoubted truth is of little or no use, if it stand alone. And yet is not the cherished thought of many, very many of our Christians, that although the world is bad, they themselves are not bad; not, at least, as bad “as other men are?” Here, then, is the defect which we deplore, no right apprehension of sin; and consequently no contrition of heart, no repentance; no shame and sorrow, no deep and habitual humiliation before the throne of Grace. And this great defect, brethren, is ours, until, by the grace of God’s HOLY SPIRIT working in us, we are brought to a true knowledge, and right estimate, of ourselves and of our spiritual circumstances. But further,

(2.) There was in the Pharisee not only a defect, but also, and in consequence of it, an excess, a redundancy,—

of what? of self-admiration, self-love, self-applause. "I fast, twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess;"—was there not much pride, much ill-timed boasting here? Did not the man spoil his very virtues, by thus vainly dwelling on them?

But, my brethren, is not this also human nature? Do we not love to take some credit to ourselves for the regularity of our habits, nay, for the readiness with which, like Herod Antipas under the preaching of John the Baptist, we submit ourselves to our spiritual Pastor, and "do many things" at his bidding, and in short "hear him gladly?" We never fail to go to church at least once on the Sunday;—twice in the year, at Easter and at Christmas, we are communicants;—we pay tithes, we pay church-rates;—we give alms, we give annual subscriptions and contributions to such and such charities, in what we consider a just proportion to the amount of all we possess! So we pass on from one virtue to another, from one praise to another; and—for why should we be hypocrites?—the secret thought of our hearts is, "All these things have I observed from my youth up! what lack I more?"

What lack we more, brethren? Why, all these things it is our duty to do, and when we have done them all, we have done no more than bare duty required of us. "We are unprofitable servants," we are paying our gracious LORD *no interest* for "the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering," unless our deep sense of that goodness move us continually to repentance—unless our faith produce in us, not mere profession and mere pride as Christians or as Churchmen, but "fruits which shall be worthy" of our faith and our repentance. For, in the sight of God, he only is the Christian, who sees the truth and feels the

blessed emphasis of that Scripture: "JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners;" "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

We turn then, secondly, to consider,

2. The right course, the right method of proceeding with regard to this matter. And here, I need but ask you to observe the Publican in the Parable—observe his downcast countenance, his attitude, his action—and then listen to his words. What the self-righteous Pharisee thanked God that he was *not*, the self-renouncing Publican freely confesses that he *is*—"a sinner;" whose only hope is in the unmerited mercy of his God! And think ye now, because he "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," this man must needs have been a sinner above all that dwelt then in Jerusalem? "I tell you, Nay"—we might almost fancy we heard our Lord reply—"but, except ye repent, ye shall all alike be found among them that perish." The Pharisees, it is true, speaking of those "bruised reeds" who clung to "the consolation of Israel" and heard Him gladly, whilst these their "blind guides" scornfully asked: "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on Him?"—the masters, I say, of Israel, who "sate in Moses' seat," took upon them to say: "This people"—or, to give their word more truly, "This rabble, which knoweth not," nor understandeth, "the Law, is cursed." But here we see one of the lowest and most despised class of the people, "a Publican," and by his own confession "a sinner," who yet knows more of the law under which he lives, than does the blind Pharisee who condemns him. He acknowledges, nay pleads before God that he is (if I may so describe him) an insolvent debtor—who owes a long arrear of unpaid service, and frankly owns that "he has nothing to pay"—and so he

claims the benefit of that "blotting-out of the handwriting that was against us," of which even in the Old Testament scriptures we read: "Behold the days are coming, saith the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers. . . . I will put my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts. . . . for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more*."

Thus, brethren, in the model that is here proposed to us, we see not only an act of lowly penitence; but, in the prayer for mercy which is founded on the plea of conscious insufficiency and infirmity, we recognise also an act of saving faith. Can we wonder, then, that our blessed Lord tells us, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other?" or can we doubt, that every one who thus humbleth himself before his Saviour, "brother" though he be "of low degree," shall "be exalted" by Him? whilst he that exalteth himself—he that, "going about to establish a righteousness of his own, has not submitted himself unto the righteousness which is of God by faith"—shall as undoubtedly "be abased" in that day, when to those who have not on His wedding-garment the Bridegroom of the glorified Church shall say: "I never knew you; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity."

And now, brethren, in conclusion—what is the one distinguishing point of difference between the two characters, or classes of men, which we have been considering? The one class has, what the other has not—a right apprehension of good and evil! The Pharisee—

* Heb. viii. 8—12.

not of one age or country only, but of all—imagines he is “already perfect,” imagines he “has attained” to acceptance with his Maker; he is a good man—he has a kind and good heart—he leads a correct and good life—and this must surely suffice to save him! The Publican, whosoever he be, whose heart whispers what his lips are not slow in uttering: “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” is deeply and painfully conscious that even “when most he would do good, evil is ever present with him.” His “spirit, indeed, is willing,” and inwardly he delights in the law of God; he rejoices in Him who “of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” But meanwhile, his “flesh is weak;” and struggle as he may with its affections and lusts, still he feels within him “another law, warring against the law of his mind, and tending to bring him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members.” What better can he do, then, than “flee for refuge to the hope which is set before us?” “By grace are ye saved through faith,” declares the Apostle, “and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” “Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but of His own free mercy He saves us;” first, “by the washing of regeneration,” and, then, as we grow up in continual danger of falling away from the grace that was given us in our baptism, by daily “renewing of the HOLY GHOST,” which He “sheds on us abundantly,” as many of us, and as often as we ask it of Him, through JESUS CHRIST, our Saviour.

Briefly then, my Christian brethren, examine whether this be indeed the faith in which you are living; look well into your own hearts and lives, and, as in the presence of God, “prove your own selves.” Are you Pharisees, self-commending, self-exalting, self-sufficient?

or are you Publicans, self-condemning, self-abasing, self-renouncing; “glorying only in the LORD,” laying claim to no “sufficiency” but “of God?” Oh, may this be our character, this the habitual frame of our minds! And that it may be so, let us make it our daily prayer that, as “trees of righteousness which the LORD hath planted” and not Man, we may be watered by “the continual dew of His holy blessing.”

“Create in me,”—so may our prayer be,—“even in me, O LORD, create that thing which by nature I cannot have, a clean heart; and daily renew, I beseech Thee, a right spirit within me! Self-abasement here, and when it shall please Thee to call me hence, exaltation; give me these, the one as the fruit of a due sense of my sinfulness, the other as the fruit of a lively faith in God, my Saviour; and when I shall go down to the house appointed for all living, behold—oh! blessed hope that Thou hast given us!—I shall not die, but live; I shall but sleep with my fathers; and when I awake up in Thy likeness, I shall indeed be satisfied with it.”

THE ORIGIN, INCREASE, AND EFFECTS OF FAITH.

BY THE
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ACTS xvi. 31.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

THE only proper answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is that which the Apostle gave, "Believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." Here was no time for laboured discourse, or a long system of instruction. Neither was it necessary, for a few sentences may convey the whole mystery of godliness. In some cases the Word of God may be heard for years, and the way of salvation may still not be understood; in others, it takes root immediately, and springs up rapidly. In this latter case such was the effect of faith in the Jailor at Philippi. He had seen that which feelingly convinced him that in a few hours he might be lost for ever; and the same grace which had reached his own heart, extended to his household also. Therefore, as we are told, "he took them (the Apostles) the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." And what is thus authenticated in one instance is corroborated by eighteen centuries of living example, is demonstrated at the present day, that the faith of JESUS CHRIST in the heart will produce the same fruits of holiness, obedience, and love in the life.

In prosecuting this subject I shall endeavour to show—

I. The origin.

II. The increase, and

III. The effects of faith.

How faith should have any intrinsic efficacy in drawing down influence from heaven it is impossible to conceive. There is a connexion, however, established by divine vouchsafement, which entitles believers to expect in the use of means such measures of gracious assistance as are requisite to sustain and support them in their religious course. Accordingly, the HOLY SPIRIT presents to us the Word of GOD as the sole rule and measure of faith. What that word contains as addressed to the understanding and the heart we receive by faith, and this faith is the *gift of the HOLY SPIRIT*.

But in ascribing the origin of faith to the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, let me be particularly guarded in stating this doctrine. We affirm not, then, that it is the office of the great Comforter to impart any knowledge additional to that which lies recorded in the page of the existing revelation, or to excite a single emotion, to enjoin a single precept, or to stimulate by a single promise which is not already found among those infallible testimonies of truth. The Scriptures as they now stand comprise the whole will of GOD with reference to the salvation and felicity of his people. It is to the voice of Scripture that the SPIRIT of GOD now directs our attention. “To the law and to the testimony” is the eternal reference made by the SPIRIT as to the only infallible criterion of right and wrong. We affirm, therefore, that we expect the mighty agency of the SPIRIT of GOD in no respect to supersede the use of the Scriptures, but rather to draw our attention to its pages; not to inflate us with the conceit of personal infallibility, but to give

us the docility of children, that we may sit reverently at the Saviour's feet, and receive his instructions, as all our salvation and desire; so that you will carefully observe, brethren, when we speak of the influence of the SPIRIT, we mean the operations of a divine agency suited to the faculties of man,—to a being who has a *conscience* to reprove his transgressions, an *understanding* to comprehend the doctrines of the Gospel, and a *will* to be affected by the motives which that Gospel holds forth.

Again, when the Scriptures speak of faith, they mean not merely a perception of the truth, but a *confidence* in its worth. To believe in CHRIST is to *confide* in him: a real knowledge of CHRIST will always lead to this confidence. Hence the value which the Scriptures attach to faith is no ground of surprise to him who has felt Christianity to be dear, and healing, and purifying to his heart. It has been by a divine influence that he has come into contact with the spiritual meaning of Christianity. Faith, therefore, may be justly said, in all its extensive operations, to be the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, since it is the result of knowledge and the basis of all holy affections and of all moral excellence. Under the influence of any other kind of faith, such as the mere understanding assents to, man is deaf to every threatening, and callous to every generous entreaty on GOD's part, until in addition to the recorded documents of grace, be given that still small voice which finds access within the chambers of the heart, and inclines him to hear, to relent, to love, to obey. Under the guidance of the good SPIRIT of GOD, then, faith embraces the whole Word of GOD, whether as revealing mysteries, promises, predictions, or moral duties. And that guidance is indispensable to the existence, the increase, and perfection of faith. But this leads me to notice,—

II. The increase of faith.

The argument then, you will observe, acquires new force under this second proposition; because any other kind of faith, than that already described, is incapable of increase. But it is the prayer of the Apostles, "Lord, increase our faith;"—not an historical faith did they pray for, such as an increased belief in any one point in the history of the Old Testament; for they knew and believed whatever it contained of miracles wrought by God and his servant Moses—of the disobedience of their fathers—the punishment and deliverance of them on many occasions. All this the Apostles knew and believed. They believed also that JESUS was the Christ. Yet with all this knowledge of the Old Testament, and all this acquaintance, by eye-sight, with the facts concerning CHRIST, which were to form so material a part of the New Testament; and with all the conviction which could not possibly fail to be connected with such an aggregate of experience and opportunity; still these very men were conscious of the weakness of their faith, and prayed to Him whose gift it is to increase it. This prayer could not be put up to the throne of grace for a stronger belief and confidence in *facts*, either as belonging to the Jewish or Christian dispensation. It is evident, therefore, that they prayed for something more than a mere conviction of the historical truth of the facts in question. For although this last is undoubtedly included in the right faith—had they stopped here, they had most assuredly stopped short of the kingdom of God.

With us the case may be different in some particulars, but in nothing that in the smallest degree can alter the nature of this argument. When any one of us in these times has looked fairly and candidly into the

evidence of our holy religion, his mind is satisfied respecting it, and he is conscious that this sort of faith admits not of increase; or if it does in some circumstances, it must arise from a farther examination of the evidences, and a removal of objections by a diligent inquiry. But this is not the object of prayer, or to be acquired by prayer as the gift of God. A speculative faith of the head is not thus to be increased any further, than as we pray to God to preserve our faculties, and maintain in us a right use of them, without prejudice and hardness of heart.

The true faith of the Gospel, then, by which we are saved, consists not in a mere belief (however steady and confirmed) of the leading facts on which Christianity is established, but in a reception of CHRIST JESUS as our all in all—the way, the truth, and the life. Thus, if I believe in CHRIST, I look to Him solely and entirely for pardon, peace of conscience and acceptance before God; for He is my priest to atone for me. If I look to Him to govern and guide me, to convince me of his love, and justice, and mercy, it is because He is my king. If I believe in Him, I look to Him for his HOLY SPIRIT, to rule constantly in my heart, to mortify the bad passions and affections of my soul; not to *force*, but to *change* my will; and, instead of an *opponent*, to render me a *willing subject* of God.

Now, the circumstance which makes all this hang closely in perfect harmony and communion is, that such a faith as this not only admits of increase, but will constantly call for increase; and in proportion to the increase of faith, will assuredly be an improvement in every good work—it will become a practical abiding principle. And this brings us to

III. The thing proposed—The effects of faith.

VOL. II.

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“This is the will of GOD, even your sanctification;” so that although we are justified by faith in virtue of CHRIST’s obedience unto death, yet, in evidence of that faith, and as the effect of it, the righteousness of sanctification is also to be received and possessed. The distinctions are clear and well-defined. The righteousness of justification, is to be *perfect and complete*; that of sanctification, though extending to all the faculties of the soul, is at any given time on this side the *grave imperfect and gradual*. The righteousness of justification is to be found in *another*, even in CHRIST; that of sanctification is to be found in *yourself*, produced by the doctrine of CHRIST and the grace of his SPIRIT. The righteousness of justification is to be your *title* for heaven, while that of sanctification is to be your meetness.

If we consult individual experience, we shall find that the affections, when withdrawn from GOD, are equally productive of misery and vice. What painful contentions and fearful results upon the mind are produced by envy, hatred, and malice, and various other passions! To reproduce purity in a being subject to such passions, requires a remedy applicable to the inward disease of the mind, a remedy which not only respects a new and favourable relation on the part of GOD, but also a new and holy state of affections on the part of man.

Now the love of CHRIST furnishes that remedy. That comprehensive and all-pervading grace is exhibited in the heart and conduct, when purified by faith. Love for CHRIST is not an ornament, it is not a right thing merely, an offering in which He delights—it is a necessary thing, it is essential to the Christian character, it is the very life and soul of all true religion, it is religion itself—its foundation, spring, and strength—its perfection and its glory. Its importance and necessity both

lie in the very nature of things. God must annihilate the religion of his Son, leave not one particle of it undestroyed in his wide creation, before any of us can be disciples of CHRIST, without a supreme love for Him—before He can alter this declaration of his SPIRIT, “If any man love not the Lord JESUS CHRIST, let him be accursed.” The want of this love is the want of every thing that can rescue, ennoble, and bless.

And wherever this love exists, it finds its hallowed access to the deepest recesses of the heart, and uniformly and actively engages all the faculties of the mind and body. It is here that the pure heart, the good conscience, and faith unfeigned, display their happy union. It is not that the pure heart and good conscience give rise to faith unfeigned, but this faith is inevitably followed by a good conscience and pure heart. Thus in the tenth chapter of Hebrews we are exhorted “to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having,” it is added, “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” Hence it is plain, that if the heart be sprinkled from an evil conscience, the conscience is made good; and it is equally plain, that the conscience becomes good through the heart being sprinkled with the blood of CHRIST, and in no other way. And surely it requires little argument to prove, that where there is faith unfeigned with a good conscience, there must be purity of heart. “The blood of CHRIST,” saith St. Paul, “shall purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God;” and St. Peter in the council of Jerusalem remarks, “purifying their hearts by faith.”

Thus true Christian faith, established in the love of CHRIST, not only affords a new estimate of all present objects, but directs the best affections into the best and

safest channels. It results in this sacred and never to be forgotten determination, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." Instead therefore of being content to measure out scantily his service, or to calculate coldly the lowest scale on which it may be decent and safe to dole forth his homage to the Almighty, the Christian now acts upon this high and generous principle, "I will no longer live to myself, but unto JESUS CHRIST. I will dedicate to his service the highest faculties and the warmest sensations of which I am possessed. I am no longer my own, but bought with a price, that I should glorify God with my body and spirit, which are his."

And as an illustration of the above remarks observe the effects of faith on the mind and conduct of this convert of Philippi. When Paul spake to him the word of life, what a new world must been opened up to the mind of that heathen jailor,—what sorrow for the past, what joys for the present, what hopes for the future! A coming state, of the existence of which he had never known; a Saviour full of love, and tenderness, and compassion, of whom he had never heard; joys unutterable and full of glory at GOD's right hand, of which he had never conceived,—and all freely offered, freely made over unto him, the darkest and the guiltiest! What a blessed hour was that which thus brought the Redeemer into his heart! Observe again the effects of faith on his conduct. In this we perceive the manifest signs and proofs of that "new creature," which whosoever is in CHRIST JESUS will become and must become. For "he brought them into his house and set meat before them: and rejoiced, believing in GOD with all his house." So entirely his former thoughts had passed away, and had

been succeeded by others of a new and different complexion. Yesterday he had no feeling for the Apostles: bleeding from the stripes they had received, unheeded, untended, he "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks;" he had not yet learned to "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, meekness." But "behold all things are become new." "He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes," made amends, as far as might be for former neglect and severity. Yesterday it was their heinous offence that they were ministers of a God unknown to him; that they taught new customs, which it was not lawful for the people to receive. Now, it is their greatest honour, that they bear the message of the most high God. These men, who show us the way of salvation, must want no comfort or attention. "He brought them into his house and set meat before them." In short, the "God of hope filled him with all joy and peace in believing."

And will not the present hour be as blessed to you, brethren, if, through our ministry the same merciful tidings find their way by the SPIRIT of God into *your* hearts? If any among you have never yet beheld the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel, but have been striving and toiling according to some hard and complicated system of human ingenuity to reconcile yourselves to God, we say to you, "Believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." All is as easy, as simple, as much within the comprehension of the most ignorant, the reach of the most helpless, the hopes of the most guilty, as it was to him of whom we have been speaking. For if you believe, as he did, you shall like him be justified from all things, that is, from all that is past. And you shall, like him, have the Divine Spirit

274 ORIGIN, INCREASE, AND EFFECTS OF FAITH.

with you for the present, and the promise of his continuance for the future. You may, therefore, be confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Above all things, then, let us examine well the foundation of our hope;—ever bearing in mind that “the LORD’s delight is in them that fear Him, and put their trust in his mercy.” And if we pass our lives under the influence of this divine principle, we have then an earnest of all that we expect and look for: we possess a part of what God has promised; and the possession of a part *now*, gives assurance that we shall enjoy the whole *hereafter*.

THE TRUE HEARER OF CHRIST, ONE WHO OBEYS HIS WILL.

BY THE

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ST. MATTHEW XVII. 5.

*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear
ye Him.*

IN the scheme of the Gospel dispensation, life and immortality were brought to light, and the faith of the first followers of CHRIST confirmed and strengthened, by a visible display of miracles. Among the many manifestations of the divine power of JESUS CHRIST, that of his transfiguration on the Mount bears a very prominent part. The celestial grandeur with which the Saviour of mankind was invested upon that extraordinary occasion, and the faithful servants of God who appeared with Him in glory, left an indelible impression on the minds of the disciples who witnessed the impressive scene, and convinced them that JESUS was the Son of God with power. It foreshadowed to them that great event, when CHRIST shall come again in the glory of the FATHER,—when all the tribes of the earth shall stand before Him in judgment,—and “He shall reward every man according to his works.” With what admiration must they have looked upon their Redeemer, who made such a full discovery of his power, and gave such undeniable evidence of his divinity! They knew from this circumstance that He taught the truth, and that what He had promised, He was also able to perform. They were convinced,

that "He was able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him," and therefore, like the Apostle Thomas, they were ready to exclaim, "My Lord, and my God."

What a striking contrast is there in this magnificent display of power, with the former life of our Saviour! He, who was born in a manger, and exposed to privation, now gleams with rays of heavenly refulgence,—He, who had not where to lay his head, and was called the friend of publicans and sinners, now assumes celestial dignity, and displays that power with which He was invested,—He, who was born of humble parents in the flesh, was now proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God, they were commanded to hear Him, and to attend to his ministry. How must the hearts of the disciples have overflowed with joy, when they saw Him in whom they believed give such an earnest of the resurrection from the dead, and such decided proofs of the immortality of the soul! They had, no doubt, long listened to his teaching with pleasure,—they had heard the words of Him "who spake as never man spake;" they had followed Him in his ministry from the beginning, but now a complete confirmation was given to their hopes, and their faith was strengthened. Many of the disciples had attended Him from the commencement of his ministry, under an impression that He was about to establish a temporal kingdom; it seems probable, that they had calculated upon the dignity they were likely to obtain, upon the offices which they should be called upon to fill, and upon the splendour of a government which was to give law to the whole world. They had no conception that their divine Master's kingdom was a spiritual one, and that it should continue to the end of time. Had they been able to have formed an unbiassed

opinion from the doctrines which He delivered, and the precepts which He gave them, they might have perceived that the kingdom of CHRIST was of a spiritual nature, and its influence chiefly directed to the heart. For a proof of this, we have his Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see GOD."

The disciples, like their fellow-countrymen, had strong prejudices, and were led to believe that the Messiah's reign would be a temporal one; they could form no conception of the spiritual nature of his government, though CHRIST took occasion to speak of it whenever an opportunity offered. He reminded them frequently, "that He must suffer many things of the chief priests and elders,—that He must be killed,—and that he must be raised again the third day." "And when Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee, He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of GOD, but those that be of men." Here we plainly see, that He endeavoured to turn their minds from the delusion under which they were labouring, and to give them right notions of Himself, and of the fate which awaited Him. But when this was in some measure ineffectual,—when their minds still clung to the world, and the vanities thereof,—when they still preferred earth to heaven, He manifested his glory to those of his chosen followers whom He selected for the occasion upon the mount of transfiguration, by which

He gave them assurance, "that his kingdom was not of this world."

The voice from heaven which said, "Hear ye Him," warned them to ponder diligently upon what they had heard and seen,—to reflect upon the pious lessons of instruction which CHRIST had given them,—to form a more intimate acquaintance with their own hearts,—and to study the character of their divine Master more carefully, that they might not mistake his conduct, and put a wrong construction upon his life and actions. Indeed the scene which they had witnessed, if anything could elevate their minds to high and heavenly things, must have had a very striking effect to convince them what God himself so loudly proclaimed, that the meek and lowly JESUS, their kind and affectionate Master, was God's well beloved Son.

We, my brethren, have not been favoured with a sight of the Son of God in the flesh; we have not heard his gracious voice, "who spake as never man spake;" we have not seen his wonderful miracles, but we have the same interest in the great salvation which He wrought for sinners as those who were attendant on his person. They saw the deep interest He took in the salvation of the human race,—his mighty and wonderful works,—the purity and innocence of his life,—and his anxious desire to bring men out of darkness into his marvellous light, and were convinced that He was that blessed Being foretold by the prophets, and expected by those who looked for redemption in Israel. We have the Scriptures which He has left us for our guide; in them He addresses us as powerfully as if He were present with us, and we heard from his divine lips the words of eternal life. He proclaims himself a Saviour to those amongst us who will diligently seek Him;—to those who break

off their sins by repentance, and their misdeeds by deep contrition and earnest prayer. He promises relief to sinners of every degree, who are suffering under the load of their sins, saying unto them, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." No distinction is made as to rank or condition; the call of the Gospel, or, in other words, the voice of CHRIST, is addressed to the hearts of all who feel their necessity of a Saviour, and who wish to be delivered from the misery to which by sin they are exposed. All may come and be saved; all may obtain an interest in the favour of God's beloved Son, if their hearts and affections are not rivetted to the fleeting enjoyments of a transitory world, but are "set upon the things which are above."

What a pleasing prospect is opened to our view, when life and immortality are placed within our reach on certain conditions! when our interest in futurity is secured by no less a sacrifice than the Son of God himself! Shall we, then, endanger our eternal happiness, by refusing to comply with the conditions upon which our salvation is rendered secure? Shall we call ourselves the disciples of CHRIST, and his servants, and be content with the name only of Christians, while in reality we are the servants of the world, and the slaves of sin? Shall we have the word of God put into our hands, and be made acquainted with the great end of our being, without heart-felt gratitude to the Saviour of mankind, for what He has done for our redemption? If we truly felt his kindness, we should seek to please Him, and should feel deeply interested in the reception, which the Gospel met with in the world. We should be sorry, my brethren, for our own failings, and as far as may be, with divine grace and assistance, endeavour to correct them. The

unrenewed and unconverted heart can never properly feel what true religion is, nor can he who continues in sin, conscientiously believe the precepts and commands of the Gospel, which condemns all sin. The worldly spirit which seeks for gratification in objects suited to a temporal existence, is not the spirit in which we must receive the Gospel,—the disciples did this, and were rebuked by their Heavenly Master; but we must receive it on higher grounds,—we must receive it, “as the words of eternal life,”—as the declaration of the Son of God himself, for our salvation,—as if we were now addressed by God, “Hear ye Him.”

Our holy Church in carrying out the great design of her Founder, and in promoting religion and piety, calls upon all her members to hear God’s word read and preached,—to join in devout and solemn prayer,—and to partake of the sacrament of the body and blood of CHRIST upon every occasion that presents itself. By her beautiful Liturgy, Ordinances, and Offices, she effectually keeps alive a spirit of sound and genuine piety, pursuing her even course, alike removed from enthusiasm on the one hand, and indifference or lukewarmness on the other. In her daily services, we are constantly reminded of our fallen, and lost condition, and our utter inability to do any thing pleasing in the sight of God without his divine aid; that this aid, this assistance may be obtained by devout and earnest prayer, proceeding from a lively faith in JESUS CHRIST, and a zealous determination through his assistance, to repent truly of all our sins, and to lead a new life. We are taught that we are miserable sinners, that we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done, and that there is no health in us,—that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save

sinners,—and that He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and believe in the Gospel, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness in their lives and conversation. What sincere member of the Church can engage in a service so persuasive and affecting, so solemn and imposing, without feeling his heart enlivened, and his thoughts directed to high and heavenly things? In the Church salvation is freely offered to all, who will come and seek, and accept it at the hands of CHRIST, and comply strictly with the command in the text, “Hear ye Him.” Your understanding may have been enlightened, your mind rightly informed in the true doctrine of salvation by JESUS CHRIST, but unless you yield a ready obedience to the precepts of the Gospel, unless you suffer the divine word to have a powerful influence over your daily conduct, of what will it avail, that you bear the sacred name of CHRIST? True, genuine religion must have its seat in the heart and affections. Are your affections, then, set upon the things which are above? Is the love of sin subdued in your hearts? Is your Saviour precious to you as a tried and valued friend, and do you rely upon Him for support and consolation amidst all the trying scenes of life? In short, do you hear the words of eternal life for your edification, improvement, and instruction?

To understand clearly the words of the text, it will be necessary for us to give them a particular, and distinct consideration, and may the HOLY SPIRIT of God bless our earnest endeavours to comprehend their meaning, and carry conviction to our hearts,—may He be with us by his presence, and render his word effectual to the salvation of our souls!

The command of God, “Hear ye Him,” is general, but how many are there to whom the Gospel is addressed,


and who profess to believe in **JESUS CHRIST**, hear Him not at all, or to no good and salutary purpose. Can it be imagined that a mere nominal belief will save a man's soul, or, that he who places his hopes on profession only, is in a fair way to attain the kingdom of Heaven? Certainly not; something more than this is required. The practice, and attentive hearing of a Christian are required. The heart,—the sincerity,—the exalted piety,—the heavenly affection,—the unbounded charity of a Christian, are essentially necessary to secure eternal salvation. It would be an easy task for a man to obtain the rewards of heaven, if true religion consisted only in profession, and name; and many would feel disposed to go thus far, and to call "**JESUS, Lord, Lord,**" who would unwillingly move a step farther, or make any other exertion to secure an interest in eternity. Here is the evil, too many fall in with the general opinion, that a little decorum in the externals of religion will go far to place their salvation in security, while they neglect the necessary means to secure the desired end. Now, nothing can be more fallacious: a man of little, or no sincerity, who hears the word of life, but attends to it not, may possess the qualification of being externally decent, but what effect can this have to the saving of his soul? Follow him in his private walks,—observe his behaviour in public,—see how he conducts himself towards his own family,—or his neighbours. Is he charitable? Does he encourage piety and religion amongst those over whom he has any control? Does he endeavour to promote the honour and glory of **GOD**, and the extension of the Saviour's kingdom in the world? Is he careful to maintain good works, and to "keep a conscience void of offence towards **GOD**, and towards man?" If not, upon what grounds does he rest his assurance of eternal hap-

piness? upon deceitful grounds; he fails to comply with the spirit of the Gospel, and will most assuredly fail of his reward.

Another class who hear not CHRIST to any salutary purpose, nor faithfully obey the precepts of the Gospel, are those, who, under the semblance of religion, endeavour to impose upon their fellow-creatures. These false professors make a great stir about religion, exhibit an unusual degree of devoutness in their deportment, and make long prayers that they may attract the attention of men, but the love of GOD, and the Saviour, is not in their hearts. They are swayed by interest, or by worldly motives, or self-applause, to assume a character to which they have no pretensions. To raise themselves in the estimation of mankind, and to be revered for their apparent sanctity,—to push their temporal interest to a greater extent, and to stand fair in their reputation, are the motives which induce them to pursue this dangerous deception, and to follow a course which will eventually lead to endless ruin. They enter the marriage feast of the Lamb without “the wedding garment of righteousness, and true holiness,” and will be rejected by the King of Heaven, “and cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Such characters may often impose upon the world, and be respected as good men, but they cannot impose upon GOD. “He is about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways.” What advantage is it, then, to carry on this deception for a few years, when the punishment which awaits it will be lasting, and eternal? How can they expect that GOD, “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” will pass over their offences, and “not be extreme to mark what is done amiss,” when it is expressly declared that “He requireth truth in the

inward parts?" It often happens, even in this world, that punishment overtakes the offenders, for when once they become detected, and their double-dealing is found out, they are shunned by all good men, and are held up to public scorn, and derision. Who, then, for a little paltry, worldly advantage, would feel disposed to barter away his immortal soul? Who would seek to deceive his neighbour, and act a deceptive part, if he would only reflect that God's eye is upon his conduct, and that "for these things, He will bring him into judgment?" If any among you, my brethren, answer this description, I earnestly pray to God, that you may see your error before it be too late, that the door of mercy may not be shut against you.

Another description of persons, and by far the most numerous in every community, are those who live with little or no sense of religion upon their minds, oftentimes in direct violation of the precepts of the Gospel. These hear not JESUS CHRIST speaking to them in his Holy Word, for their lives are in direct opposition to the spirit of Christianity and the dictates of conscience. Alive only to pleasure and sensual indulgence they pass their time in vain amusements and unprofitable pursuits; hurried on in the busy round of fleeting joys,—careless as to the future, and intent only upon making the most of present enjoyments. If ever a serious impression is at any time made upon their minds by hearing God's Word preached,—by the example of others,—or by the loss of those who are dear to them, or by any other way, it takes no root in such an unkindly soil, but is soon obliterated by temporal pursuits, and vanishes "like chaff before the wind." The carnal mind is at enmity with God. Grace can never dwell in hearts where sin abounds. What an unfortunate condition is



this! How must it grieve the true Christian to see so many of his fellow-creatures deliberately treading in the paths of sin, and living from day to day with as much indifference to their eternal interests as if they were never to die! How can they hear the words of CHRIST, who will not come near his house of prayer, nor read his divine Word with attention, nor offer up one single petition to the author of their being? Or what happiness can they expect in a future state who think of nothing but this, and leave their salvation to time and chance? Surely, if the words of Revelation be true,—if the testimony of the Saviour standeth sure, then we have the clearest proofs that they who live and die in their sins “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” “Oh that they were wise,—that they would understand this,—that they would consider their latter end!” To you who are the slaves of sin, I would say, Repent, and believe the Gospel, and hear the words of eternal life, that you may find mercy at the hand of God, and that JESUS, who came into the world to be your Saviour, may make an atonement for your sins. To you who are lost in the pursuit of earthly enjoyments I would say, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.” “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” Lose no time in quitting the scenes of wickedness, and setting about the great work of reformation and repentance, that you may enjoy peace of conscience here, and “a hope full of immortality” hereafter.

There is one description of persons more, which deserves to be distinctly noticed; I mean those who reserve to themselves the indulgence of any one known sin, but whose conduct in other respects deserves commendation. They feel the necessity of coming to CHRIST


for salvation, and listen to His word with delight; their religious conduct seems decorous, and at times they are affected with a high degree of piety and zeal, but one besetting sin remains, one unmortified lust, one unholy desire, which mars all their good intentions, and destroys the prospect of that eternal happiness to which in other respects they might be entitled. They forget the words of Scripture that "he who offends in one point is guilty of the whole law;" and that whatever their besetting sin may be, whether pride, drunkenness, sensuality, or deception, so long as it remains an idol in the heart, it is offensive to God, repugnant to his holiness, and a bar to their salvation. These men, like Agrippa, "are almost persuaded to become Christians;" and would to God they would become such, by eradicating from their hearts this dangerous error, and by cultivating a lively faith in Him whose mission was mercy and whose ministry was love, they would become truly wise,—even "wise unto salvation." How grievous it is to see any of our fellow-creatures who have proceeded thus far in their Christian course, fall short of the prize of their high and heavenly calling, and endanger their future prospects! One step more, and their object would be gained; one firm resolution to devote the whole heart to God, and a glorious immortality would be their portion; one steadfast resolve in hearing and applying every Gospel truth, and heaven would be gained.

It may reasonably be asked, my brethren, if all these characters which have been described are deficient in their duty, who are they "who hear CHRIST;" the answer is plain, they who believe in Him with their whole heart,—they who love His word, his Church, his doctrines, and his ministers; they who show by their general and daily practice that the word of God dwells richly in their

hearts; they who feel the load of their sins, and come frequently to the throne of grace for pardon and forgiveness; they who neglect no opportunity of improving the tone of their morals, elevating their minds with devotional feeling, and "setting their affections on the things which are above." The truly religious man is one who has brought his natural inclinations into subjection to the precepts of the Gospel, by the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, which he has obtained by earnest and devout prayer. They who truly hear the blessed Son of God have him constantly in their thoughts, and dread to commit any action which they know to be contrary to his express command. They love him, "because He first loved them," and feel assured that the greatest earthly happiness,—that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," is to fit themselves by a life of piety and holiness for an inheritance in that Kingdom which will never end. No corroding cares, no fruitless anxieties, no unquiet thoughts, disturb their minds who have brought every unhallowed feeling into subjection, and have gained a complete victory over the world, with all its fascinating enjoyments. Their treasure is in heaven, and where their treasure is, there will their hearts be also. To them the world is but vanity,—here they live to prepare for immortality, and in their journey through life keep this object constantly in view. They feel the blessed influence of the SPIRIT upon their hearts in their daily approach to the throne of grace, and they acknowledge with gratitude their love to the Son of God for all the mercies of salvation and redemption which He has procured for them. What happiness then can be compared to theirs who have, by a life of piety and devotion, endeavoured to make God for their friend; and whose hopes and expectations centre in that kingdom

“where alone true joys are to be found?” In sorrow they need no comforter, for the Sun of Righteousness sheds his cheerful rays into their hearts; in trouble they are not cast down, for they are taught to believe “that their light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:” and when about to close their earthly career, they feel the hand of their Heavenly Father supporting them through the valley of the shadow of death. In hearing CHRIST’s word and obeying it, they experience the greatest comfort, and depart from this world with “a hope full of immortality.”

My brethren, let us by way of application strictly examine and try ourselves. Do we hear CHRIST speaking to us in his Holy Word, in the Church, and by his ministers, or is the declaration in the text delivered to us in vain? Do we live like those who have to give an account of their works, and who expect their Lord in judgment? Is our faith productive of good works? Do we draw from the oracles of truth rules for our conduct through life, and do we study the Scriptures daily with a view to discover our duty, improve our nature, and increase our piety? Are we constant in our attendance at church, regular in our private acts of devotion; do we earnestly pray for the forgiveness of our sins, through the intercession of JESUS CHRIST? Are we zealous to promote religion in ourselves, and by our example to recommend it to others? If not, we are still in nature’s darkness, and are yet far from the kingdom of God. If we hear the Gospel and act contrary to its spirit;—if we do not comply with all its injunctions we act in the spirit of unbelief, we dishonour God, disgrace our profession, and shall certainly have cause to repent our folly and misconduct. Let me, then, exhort



you to mind "the one thing needful," and not only to hear the word of God in the Church, but to practise it daily both in public and in private, that when He who came to be your Saviour shall return to be your Judge, you may be found prepared to meet Him, and may receive from the hand of your Heavenly Father, the reward promised to a life of faith and obedience.

HOPE.

BY THE

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CURATE OF ST. PAUL'S, KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

PSALM CXXX. 5.

In His Word do I hope.

THE life of a religious man is ever a life of hope. I say not that he has no enjoyment of the present, and looks for all good at the hand of the future; I say not that he deems this life a mere burden, which hereafter shall be done away; I say not that he involves in one general sentence of condemnation all things of his present existence as trifling, or base, or full of sorrow and disappointment. This is not his character. He knows well that the present is the time for working out his very salvation, and therefore he will not think lightly of it. He knows that things of this world, whatever may be their intrinsic value, may be, under God, the implements and the source of good to himself. He knows that this earth, transient and corrupt, is yet a fabric of God's creation, and to himself may be the scene in which an immortal soul shall act that good part of which it shall never be deprived. And yet his is a life of hope; for all good to him is but the type of future happiness and perfection; and in his estimation evil itself brings its own happiness, for mortal sorrows themselves suggest the time of their termination, and when viewed and experienced aright, are preparations for its arrival. And so the Psalm before us is a song of hope; uttered from the depths of sorrow, and adversity, and repentance,

it still breathes the spirit of quiet confidence in His mercy to whom it is addressed. The life of the irreligious, on the other hand, is essentially a life of enjoyment as contradistinguished to one of hope; a life which would extract the utmost possible pleasure from the present, rather than in patience abide the issues of the future; which cannot conceive of joy delayed; whose motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And the main difference between these two characters is, that the one seeks for good things here, the other is content to wait till hereafter.

Now the subject which our Psalm seems to suggest is that of *Human Hope* in general; and I shall seek to treat of it in the following method. Firstly, that a condition of hope rather than of enjoyment is the natural condition even of the best men with regard to the affairs of this world; that if we would act an honest and useful and industrious part in our natural and worldly calling or profession, our state must be a state of hope. Secondly, that rising above the mere affairs and duties of this life to the things of God's revelation, we shall find that the history of religion from the earliest time down to the present has been a history of hopeful men—a dispensation of hope; that hope was the great virtue of good men under the Law, and still continues to be a characteristic grace of the Gospel of CHRIST. And lastly, I shall seek to examine what is the intention of God in thus leading our minds ever to hope in the future rather than complacently to repose in the enjoyment or certainty of the present, and inquire what the practical advantages to ourselves are, in being placed in such a state of comparative ignorance during the present, as hope in the future necessarily implies.

In the first place, then, let us consider the affairs of

our present life; and, if we can discover that the same principle characterizes both our natural and our religious life, we may well draw consolation and encouragement from the discovery; it will be a strong inducement to trust in the mercy and wisdom of God, if we find that the same general principle of government characterizes his treatment of us in every aspect under which human life may be regarded. The lessons of childhood, then, and of early maturity, all bear upon the future. Each exertion of our younger years is directed to qualify us for somewhat to come. It is plainly necessary for all to use such prudence and industry in the present as may ensure comfort for the future; and yet, however earnest and industrious we may be, of the issues of this future we can be said to know nothing. It is an ordinance of God's natural government of us, as creatures of this world, that amid our worldly exertions after any kind of success, we should in a great measure feel only what comes to hand, and work as it were in the dark. When young persons begin life, they begin it with hope, which God has implanted in them for wise and necessary ends. Their knowledge cannot be said to extend further than this simple truth, that a virtuous activity will in some manner conduce to their well-being, and that vice and indolence must be destructive of their temporal prospects. If they are wise, they content themselves with hope; they do not repine at their ignorance concerning the success of their future life, but cheerfully labour for blessings which they cannot see. So that the condition of youth and maturity, when viewed with reference to an advanced life, bears an exact analogy to the whole of our present existence, viewed with reference to the world to come. Hope is, in its peculiar way, the preparation for each.

But let us proceed to search for the same principle of Divine dealings in the case of the earliest system of God's Revelation, and we shall find throughout the entire range of the Old Testament, that the rewards attached to a fulfilment of Divine commandments were ever more or less obscure; that faithful and pious men of early times were content in many cases to labour strenuously in God's service, knowing little about the precise nature of the result to themselves; and that the object of this obscurity was simply this, that room might be left for hope in the hearts of his faithful servants, which, if the full knowledge of their reward had been vouchsafed, would have been of course precluded; for "That which a man seeth," saith the Apostle, "why doth he yet hope for?"

No sooner then had the perfection of Paradise been forfeited by the sin of our first parents than the signal mercy of God appeared in the promise of a Redeemer. It might have been supposed that as this promise was certain, so also its subject should be clearly defined; that it would not have been left for good men to doubt respecting the promised Saviour, his personal character, his office, his time of appearing. But had this information been given, it would have destroyed, in a great measure, the ground of religious hope, and that trust in God's word which is at once a duty which we owe to God, and under his grace may be a main instrument to our sanctification.

Accordingly, the earliest prophecy which related to the Messiah, was perhaps the most obscure of all. "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed—it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." Only let these words be compared with the Gospel events to which they refer, namely, the temptation of Christ in the

wilderness, his crucifixion (a transient victory gained by the enemy of mankind), the subsequent triumph of the Resurrection and of the Ascension; let, I say, the event be compared with the prophecy, and we shall see at once that the language of the prophecy was rendered purposely obscure. It was plain enough to teach those ancient patriarchs that they might look for the future redemption, but not so plain as to leave no room for the exercise of hope, and an implicit trust in the unerring word of God. The observation might be extended in detail to every promise of God under the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensation, of religion; how almost vague and dark does that emphatic promise sound which was so often repeated to Abraham, and which, like that already referred to, had the future Redeemer of the world for its subject: "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" but when? where? how? by whom? these were questions which the purest hope would have thought it presumptuous to ask—it would rather trust in God's word.

Thus, again, the whole system of types and sacrifices under the Law, while it foreshadowed the future atonement to be made by the Son of God upon the Cross, was all certainly an obscure indication of it, calculated to draw out the qualities of faith and hope in the future fulfilment of God's word of promise. And so, too, the language of the Hebrew prophecies was ever more or less obscure. They certainly grew plainer and plainer, and a comparison of the prophecies in the Book of Genesis with those which are found in that of Isaiah would serve to shew how great had been the increase of light vouchsafed to the world; still, we know that even the latest prophecies were much mistaken and misunderstood by the nation at large. A small number of

the most pious and hopeful Israelites, such as were Joseph the husband of Mary, Joseph of Arimathæa, and the aged Simeon, alone recognised the establishment of God's kingdom in the commencement of the Gospel.

Such, then, was the state of God's people under the Law; a state of hope in the future verification of God's word. And St. Paul, in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, makes a faithful hope the excellence of these ancient servants of God, whom he enumerates at great length. The condition, the piety, the very happiness of these men was in hope—the hope of a happy future amid the anxieties and labours and sin and sorrow of the present. Of all it is said that they died in the faith of hope; “not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth.”

And now that we have arrived at the period of CHRIST's appearing and the establishment of his Gospel in the world, we have to recognise a time, when in a great measure the hope of the faithful was changed into a certainty—when the object of types and prophecies was in a large measure fulfilled in the accomplishment of Divine predictions. But a little consideration will enable us plainly to see, that, large as is the amount of knowledge and certainty in Divine things, and bounteous as is the completion of Divine promise in the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, for us who have been permitted to see, what many prophets and kings and righteous men of old only desired to see, yet, the life of God's servants under the Gospel is still a life of hope. Our LORD himself taught his faithful followers at the first, that Christian hope was their needful and sole support under the cruel opposition and trials which awaited them from

the persecution of the world. If He taught them to believe that they were blessed when men reviled and persecuted and spoke evil of them, it was because they could look forward to a great reward in heaven; that is, they had a hope high and precious and strong, of which no earthly power could deprive them. And what other principle than that of hope in the word of God could have animated the sinking forms of apostles and martyrs of the early Church, and nerved them to endure the part which they sustained as forerunners of the faith of CHRIST.

St. Paul spake in the language of hope, when he said, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord JESUS CHRIST;" "by whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we now stand and rejoice, *in hope* of the glory of God." "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience *hope*." St. Peter spake the language of hope when he called upon all Christians to "bless God and the Father of their Lord JESUS CHRIST, who according to his abundant mercy had begotten them again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead;" and exhorted them, amid all temptation and persecution, to "gird up the loins of their mind; to be sober, and *hope* to the end." St. James spake the language of hope in the Word of God, when he said, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the LORD hath promised." And St. John's last words were words of hope,—of affectionate and anxious hope in the coming of his LORD; the last words of the Bible sound like the sigh of hope in the promise of JESUS that he would appear again. "He which tes-

tifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord JESUS."

And now, my brethren, the practical lesson derivable from the considerations laid before you must be plain. How is it that religious hope has ever been, in all ages of the world, so important a step in the ascent of human salvation? What are the practical advantages, what the intention of our Heavenly Father, in thus placing his most faithful and obedient children in a condition of hope? What, but that the work of hope is the result of what the outward circumstances in which men are placed are designed by God himself to produce in us,—namely, a constant sense of sin, a distrust of ourselves, a patience under ignorance, which is pre-eminently fitted to induce an earnest confidence in God, and additional perseverance and energy in the pursuit of our Christian course. True it is that things might have been constituted very differently,—that God might have held out as a reward for our service of Him a certain knowledge rather than an uncertain hope,—that each good man should have been distinctly assured of his own particular acceptance with God, and of his final salvation, rather than be led to hope for it; but how then could we have rendered to Him that kind of service which He requires? It is good for us to remain in the ignorance of hope, if by that ignorance we are rendered more anxiously diligent in the work of our salvation, rather than to fall victims to that supineness which any certainty of future success (such is our mortal nature,) would necessarily induce in us. What is it that rouses each army in the conflict to do its utmost but that the victory is for both an object of hope? Did a voice from heaven declare at the outset of the battle which side should be victorious, the efforts of both

would cease,—the one would be secure of conquest and the other would despair; and so no stronger or more needful incentive to Christian perseverance can be imagined than Christian hope.

Hope is the mainspring of Christian action, and one of the greatest blessings of God to us; the more hopeful we are, the more shall we realize to ourselves our own ignorance, from which that hope springs; and doing so, the more fully shall we perceive, the more highly value and admire, the more earnestly throw ourselves upon the boundless wisdom of our Heavenly Father, which will be enhanced by its contrast to ourselves. Let us then value in our Christian hope a precious gift of God: our plain duty is to be thankful for what we have, rather than to repine at what we have not. How marvellous is it that sinful, unthankful, ever-erring as we are, we have not been long ago consigned to an eternal ignorance of God! How little cause for wonder exists in that we have not been permitted to know concerning God and our salvation that which we do not deserve to know, and doubtless with our present faculties should be unable to comprehend. I say not that there is no anxiety mingled with a Christian's hope, but I say that if there be, it were far better to cherish than to discard it; it will give rectitude to our ways, energy to our works, purity and sublimity to our thoughts; far better to feel such anxiety in this life, if it be succeeded by a certainty in joy and knowledge throughout eternity, than to banish it here, only to feel the evil of despair throughout an eternal future. Surely every kind and degree of anxiety for the state of our future being will tend to keep us safe from the fearful danger of negligence in the work of our salvation. Perhaps it may be true that the more we are anxious about the preservation of our souls, the more

ardently shall we prize them ; for anxiety and affection in human things for the most part go hand in hand, and what we most weary ourselves to think about, we, generally speaking, love the best ; the youngest and weakest child is most tenderly because most anxiously loved by its parent,—the most uncertain gifts and blessings of life are the most highly valued when they arrive. Men care least for their certain inheritances, and far more for that which in hope and labour they have acquired for themselves ; that victory is the dearest which has had all the chances of war arrayed against it ; that spring the most welcome and beautiful at which we looked in hope through the gloom of winter ; that harbour the fairest and the calmest which has been reached through tossing, and danger, and tempest ; that fountain the sweetest which the weariest search has found in the heart of the desert itself. God grant to us, my brethren, all the earnestness, all the humility, all the comfort and encouragement of hope ; till at the last hope shall be swallowed up in enjoyment, and all earthly graces and duties, having done their part, shall be absorbed in the perfection of that state where faith and hope shall be no more, and love only shall remain ; where prayers shall be answered and promises fulfilled, and ignorance and anxiety shall terminate in the perfect knowledge and enjoyment of God in glory. Amen.

THE HOLY COMMUNION.

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF QUEBEC,
IN THE YEAR 1804.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JACOB MOUNTAIN, D.D.,

FORMERLY LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

ST. LUKE XXII. 19.

This do in remembrance of Me.

I HAVE, upon a former occasion, explained the nature and end of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; its fitness and expediency; the benefits derived from the observance of it; the obligation to compliance; and the ill consequences of neglect. I am now to consider the proper qualifications for partaking in it; and the reasons which are generally advanced to excuse or palliate omission; and to conclude with such reflections as the whole subject taken together, may appear properly to suggest.

The path of duty lies plainly before us, if we will but enter upon and pursue it. The means of grace are put into our hands; it rests with ourselves whether we will make the proper use of them. As, by refusing to partake of the feast instituted in remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of CHRIST, we appear to relinquish our claim to any share in the sacrifice itself, so do we forfeit every advantage from actual communion, if his sufferings and his death have no place in our hearts.

It seems obvious that we cannot, in an acceptable and effectual manner, perform this service, unless we so commemorate the *death* of our Redeemer, as "to die ourselves unto sin;" nor have any well-founded reason

for rejoicing in his *resurrection*, unless we truly desire “to rise again unto righteousness.”

The great point, therefore, is to determine wherein consists that due disposition of mind, that necessary preparation of the heart, which may qualify the sincere Christian for obtaining the benefits in question.

Of those who despise and reject the religion of the Redeemer, nothing need be said. But of professed believers—they who live in the unrestrained indulgence of their sensual appetites, of lewdness, gluttony, drunkenness, impurity of any description; they who are in the habit of wantonly and wilfully insulting, by oaths and imprecations, the holy name of God; they whose whole soul is occupied by the desire of gain, who by secret guile and cunning artifice lie in wait to deceive; they who live in malice, hatred, and envy; and lastly, they “who regard not the cry of the poor destitute”—these, (as indeed it is improbable that they should desire to present themselves at the table of the Lord,) so are they, in their present state, manifestly unworthy to find admittance there. Persons of this description are not only as unfit as they are indisposed to *communicate*, but they are also totally unfit for the *name* and *profession* of a *Christian*; unfit to partake in *any* religious service, and, until in some degree changed by repentance, unfit to raise their thoughts to Him who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.”

It will also easily be seen, that no persons, of whatever description, should presume to approach the table of the Lord, who cannot divest themselves of all thoughtless levity and careless indifference. Thus far there can be no difficulty in deciding.

But it is much to be regretted that the nature and degree of preparation, and of fitness, are very often matter of great doubt and scruple to persons of a very

different character from those just mentioned; and more especially to persons of wavering, of timid, or of melancholy dispositions. And it is probable that a good deal of unreasonable, and even of superstitious dread, is derived from mistaken notions of the subject, and from a misconception of the argument of St. Paul upon this point, as also of the expressions alluding to it in the introductory exhortation in our Communion Service. The passage to which I refer is this, "Wherefore, whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (more properly translated, condemnation,) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

In order to understand the real force of these expressions, we must consider the occasion upon which they were used. It appears that the Corinthian converts (to whom St. Paul was writing,) had grossly perverted the Holy Communion by not distinguishing it from a common repast! and by a greedy, rude, and intemperate use of the elements of bread and wine, which were provided for purposes of piety and edification. "They who eat and drink unworthily," he says, "eat and drink condemnation to themselves." But he very clearly explains the unworthiness, with which he reproaches them, to be nothing else but the *irreverent, disorderly, and uncharitable* manner in which they partook of this sacred festival. "This," he observes, "is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken."—"What?" continues he, "have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and

shame them that have not?" The unworthiness of the Corinthians, therefore, upon whom these judgments were inflicted, was of a nature, which, as the Lord's Supper is now administered, it would be very difficult for any communicant to incur. No man need feel himself in danger, I apprehend, of being tempted so far to forget himself, as to receive it with indecent greediness, or disorderly deportment. Such, however, was the offence of the Corinthians; which found its punishment in those temporal judgments, with which it pleased God to mark his displeasure at their contempt and abuse of this sacred institution, and to which the exhortation in our service refers.

But is this all? not to partake with indecent greediness, with rude and uncharitable eagerness, not to pollute the feast by shameless intemperance? Is this all that is required to a worthy participation of the Holy Sacrament? By no means. I observe only that this was what constituted the particular unworthiness of the Corinthians, and was the cause of the judgments by which *they* were visited; judgments of which, from this cause, there can now, it is presumed, be no probability of danger. It should seem, therefore, that many serious and religious persons have, from these expressions, taken unreasonable alarm, and have suffered themselves to be deterred by "fear, where no fear is." I speak of persons who, notwithstanding they are steadfast in their belief, and sincere in their endeavours to obey the commandments of God, are yet deterred from partaking in this beneficial rite by an apprehension that the imperfections and errors, of which they are conscious, (but cannot wholly divest themselves,) may draw upon them the condemnation mentioned by St. Paul; but this very apprehension is, of itself, an abundant security against the danger of in-

curing the guilt of the Corinthians. Persons, the general course of whose life is governed by the precepts of the Gospel; who are always sincerely religious, though not so happy as to be always equally influenced by the power of faith, and the authority of conscience, have surely all the reason in the world to be satisfied, that they cannot but be far removed from that impiety which the apostle condemns—the strange impiety of confounding a sacred service with a sensual appetite, and *thereby* “not discerning the Lord’s body.”

But let St. Paul, who gave this alarming caution, give also the rule by which, in this matter, our conduct is to be governed. “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup: for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” The examination here intended, clearly refers to the case mentioned; and to the state of mind in which persons should be at the time of communicating. Let a man so examine himself as to be sure that he has the proper reverence for the solemnity, the proper motive for desiring to partake in it, and proper sentiments of gratitude and devotion. Let him duly consider the nature of the office, the fit behaviour for the occasion, and if he hath been guilty of any irreverence, “let him judge himself for it,” and avoid it for the future, “that he be not judged of the Lord;” and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

But as this is the only rule that the Scripture offers us, we will consider it in a more general and extensive sense. Now in this sense, examination can only be of one of these two kinds: either an examination respecting the soundness of our belief and the general principles upon which our conduct is founded, whether, in fact, we be sincere Christians or not; or an examina-

tion into the present disposition of our minds, whether they be, at this particular time, more than commonly penetrated and affected by sentiments of devotion.

The former of these inquiries is of very great importance, but certainly of very little difficulty; the latter, though of less importance, often abounds with difficulty, and is productive of much anxiety and scruple!

The first of these inquiries may properly enough be referred to the direction given by St. Paul, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the *faith*, prove your own-selves;" "know ye not yourselves how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be *reprobate*?" And that this species of examination is not a matter of very difficult accomplishment, St. John also may further assure us, for he asserts that "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." This being the case, although it becomes every Christian, upon every solemn occasion, and more especially when preparing to receive the Sacrament, to endeavour to excite in his mind the most reverential and the most grateful sentiments of devotion; to lay aside, as much as he can, all worldly anxieties and desires, and to examine more strictly, and particularly into the state of his soul, as time and opportunity may be afforded; yet, where this is, by any *unavoidable* concurrence of circumstances prevented, a good and sincere man need not surely, under the notion of the *necessity* of the *second* sort of examination above-mentioned, fear to offend his Maker by venturing, without it, to obey, in this instance, his commands! I say, when the preparation above mentioned is *unavoidably* prevented; for it is one thing to be thus *accidentally hindered*, and quite another thing voluntarily to avoid examination, because we do not like to see our faults and

errors, or are previously determined not to correct them!

But a truly sincere and well-intentioned man, by the habitual course of a virtuous life, is in a continual state of general *preparation*. And it is as certain that such a man, "out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned," may, *at all times*, safely communicate, as it is that a profligate and vicious person can, *at no time*, be fit to do so, by any *preparation* of a *few days'* devotion, however formal or exact.

Let it not be supposed that there is any external part of religious observance, by which men can receive benefit without repentance and serious intention of amendment; that to be scrupulously exact with respect to any particular point of duty will supply the defect of obedience in the rest! With respect to the point before us—self-examination is confessedly a duty—but however carefully performed it is worth *very little* unless founded upon a serious and settled resolution to reform, (by God's grace,) whatever we shall find amiss; and to fulfil without exception or reserve, all the other duties He has set before us. With such a serious intention, no man can examine himself too frequently, nor understand the real state of his soul too well; nor is there any occasion more proper for effecting this, than when he is about to approach the Lord's table; but these things are not *necessarily* and *inseparably* united. As the approach of the Sacrament is not the *only* season proper for self-examination, so neither is a set, formal, and particular examination, always, and in all cases, absolutely *requisite*, (though always *expedient* and *useful*,) to the reception of the Sacrament. As we ought, by no means, to confine the practice of self-examination to that particular occasion, and *still less* to fancy that a

stated and formal preparation of that kind is *all* that is required; so may we, under the circumstances above mentioned, very safely communicate, though it should so happen that an opportunity is denied us for a very extensive or very minute inquiry into the exact state of our religious progress, at that particular moment. I am very desirous not to be misunderstood:—my position is, that a careful examination of our conduct and manner of life, before we partake of the Lord's Supper, is highly expedient, useful, and commendable, as a means of inspiring us with proper humility and devotion, and of strengthening our resolution to resist temptation. But that, as such an examination is not, under all circumstances, *indispensably necessary*, the supposed difficulty of it, or the want of sufficient time to go minutely into it, certainly cannot avail those who would make this a plea to excuse their neglect of *a positive duty*: nor, if there be times when the accidental pressure of affairs may leave a man's mind unfitted for this rite, can that which may happen upon *occasion* be *always* pleaded; nor if it be, can the plea be admitted.

Indeed, there is reason to think that excuses of this kind are more frequently factitious than sincere; that they are, for the most part, shallow pretences, which do not cover men's delinquency from *their own* view. And I have perhaps dwelt longer upon this part of the subject than was necessary. It is *not* the pretended difficulty, nor the want of sufficient time, nor the idea of absolute necessity; but the *real disinclination* that lies at the bottom!

Let us now proceed, therefore, to consider the case of those, whose scruples, as being more sincere, are more worthy of serious attention. There are, I am induced to believe, many Christians, unaffectedly religious, who, in

the simplicity and humility of their hearts, think it *safer* to retire from the solemnity, under the idea that there might be rashness in presenting themselves; or affected by a consciousness that the fervour of their devotion is not equal to the occasion; or by a sense of being always frail and sinful creatures, notwithstanding their wish and endeavour to avoid all known offences. But this is not real unworthiness, but an imagination as groundless as it is distressing, which ought to be resisted and subdued. Not to be *worthy* to receive the Sacrament is one thing, and to receive it *unworthily* another. We are none of us *worthy* to receive the honour that is conferred upon us; we approach the altar with that very declaration on our lips, and, it is presumed, with that sentiment deeply engraven on our hearts; but nevertheless, *accepting* that honour with *humility, gratitude, and thankfulness*, we shall not *unworthily* receive it. In general, if a man be sincere in his belief, and in his conduct truly endeavour to keep the commandments of God; if he habitually strive to conform to the rule of life laid down in the Gospel; if his conscience accuse him not of unforsaken or unrepented sin; if his faith be sound, his piety and charity habitual; although he be subject to occasional deviations and lapses (the common lot of human infirmity); although he be occasionally surprised into some irregularity of passion or expression; although an unguarded action may escape him, or an improper thought obtrude itself upon his mind; although he may have to reproach himself with incidental backwardness in devotion, and lukewarmness in affection; such a man ought not to judge himself, thereby, unqualified *altogether* for this religious duty, and by so judging deprive himself of the *best* means of correcting his errors and amending his faults. Though his practice be imperfect, his *heart* is

uncorrupted, his *principles* are *sound*. Let him, therefore, after proper reflection and due self-abasement, "take the holy Sacrament to his comfort," with reasonable hope of a greater portion of grace herefrom to guide and support his future resolution.

It is very much to be desired, that they, who consider so deeply the danger of communicating without due preparation, would consider more attentively the danger of *not making* that *preparation*! If the judgment denounced against unworthy communicants, which we have just been considering, appears to them to be so alarmingly severe, how have they satisfied themselves that the sentence against those who, being invited, refuse to come, has a less degree of severity? Has God not said that such "shall not taste of his supper?" Has not our Saviour warned them that "unless they eat his flesh and drink his blood, they have no life in them?" What will they say to this? He who wholly abstains will undoubtedly escape the penalty of eating and drinking *unworthily*; but will he thereby escape that condemnation which is due to those, who contumaciously refuse to come, *because they choose to remain in that state* which, according to their own admission, renders them *unworthy*? Will such an one anywhere find reason to flatter himself, that his refusal to perform this positive duty will merit favour under the colour of a meritorious delicacy, a laudable refinement of piety? Will his *humility* instruct him to expect that *constantly remaining*, in his own judgment, unfit to partake of the Lord's Supper on earth, he shall hereafter be found *worthy* to partake of the supper of the Lamb in heaven? How is it possible he should persuade himself, that, because in partaking this festival unworthily there is *danger*, in absolutely refusing to partake it there is safety? Let him

be assured there is *no safe way* to escape the judgment he fears, but immediately to set about the business of rendering himself less unworthy to serve God here, and be admitted to his presence hereafter. Without this, what has he to expect, but that our Saviour will say to him, as He did to some of the Jewish nation, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Let me then beseech those who, from an unfortunate misconception of this subject, have been led inconsiderately to conclude, that the danger of receiving unworthily being great, it is the *safer way* wholly to refrain from the Sacrament, and not receive at all, seriously to consider, that the ground of this persuasion sinks under them at once, if there be, as most certainly there is, *at least as great danger* on the other hand; viz., in the neglect of this duty:—To avoid a doubtful peril they rush upon one that is certain! Of the two it cannot but be conceived to be a more offensive and presumptuous neglect *wholly* to decline the Sacrament, than to partake of it with *some defect* of the proper qualifications. The greatest disqualification for the favour of ALMIGHTY GOD is a wicked life, but *his* life is likely in the first instance to be *at least as* wicked, and is certainly *much more* likely to *continue* so, who rejects the use of the Sacrament, than *his* who embraces it with *any* degree of *reverence* and *preparation*, though much less than he ought.

By those, who systematically neglect this duty, the strongest restraint upon vice is evidently broken through. The other restraints of religion necessarily lose much of their power; human laws cannot reach the root of the evil; and as to the sense of shame, and the fear of disgrace, their influence upon moral conduct appears to be every day decreasing.

Far be it from me to speak lightly of the *real*

scruples of any serious and pious mind. It is those, who are affected by *such* scruples, whom I would particularly request to observe, that their way of reasoning would carry them to the most alarming lengths,—to the most absurd, as well as the most dangerous consequences. For if it be a sufficient reason for abstaining from the Sacrament, to say that it is better wholly to omit so sacred an office, than to perform it in an *imperfect* manner, the same reason would support a man (in any degree immoral in his conduct) in laying *religion* entirely *aside*, and rejecting altogether the duties of *prayer*, and of *reading* or *hearing* the Word of God! *because* it *cannot* be denied that there is a *proportionable danger* in the *unworthy* or *unprofitable use* of any of these! To offer any prayers or praises to God with false and unsanctified lips—from a heart tainted with the guilt of rebellion against his holy will, what is this but to mock the Majesty of heaven, and to insult the long-suffering of our God and Saviour? It cannot be questioned that such a conduct is pregnant with *danger*. “The prayer of the wicked,” we are told (*viz.*, of those who have no intention but to continue so),—“is an abomination to the LORD.” The Scripture informs us, that to those, who are *not reformed* by the doctrine of the Gospel, “it is the savour of death.” And our Saviour expressly gives a caution to the same effect, respecting hearing the Word of God: “Take heed,” says He, “*how ye hear*.” But will any man venture seriously to argue from hence, that on account of the danger thus indicated, the most *prudent* and the *safest* thing for sinners is altogether to decline the practice of *prayer*, and avoid all occasions of *hearing* the Word of God? Surely not; yet it is no less true that he who prays *unworthily*, and hears the Word of God *unprofitably*, is actually guilty of a contempt of God and his Saviour,

and thereby aggravates his guilt, than that *he* does this who unworthily partakes of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To use amiss, to perform irreverently *any* part of religious service, is certainly a very presumptuous and very dangerous offence; but to cast off all religion that we may not be liable to this offence, is a most desperate remedy for the evil—it is like resolving to take no food at all, because improper food is injurious to health; it is, in short, to rush upon inevitable destruction, to avoid a danger which it was in our power to avert!

It has been thought that some conscientious persons decline taking the Sacrament from an apprehension that the sins which they shall commit afterwards will be unpardonable! But where do they find in Scripture the least ground for such an apprehension, or anything that can in the smallest degree countenance the notion? Undoubtedly to sin deliberately after this, or any other solemn act of religion, engaging us to the contrary, is an aggravation of the guilt. But this, (as has been just now shewn in another case,) is no good argument for the abstaining from such acts. The *offences* of those, who have been blessed with the *Gospel revelation*, are *certainly* aggravated by the advantages they have received; but was this ever considered as a reason to deter a man from becoming a Christian? The Scripture informs us, that “if we sin *wilfully*, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin.” But where does it inform us, that if we sin *after we have received the Sacrament*, our sins become *unpardonable*?

One might reasonably hope, that the conscience which is so far awakened as to feel the danger of falling into sin, might easily be brought to see that *this* danger is not to be *prevented* by neglecting the Sacrament, but

increased; because, (as has been before observed,) we thereby forego the opportunity of obtaining advantage by God's assisting grace. And if, after communicating, we should, from human frailty, again offend, we may be renewed by repentance, through Him, "who is our advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous," Him, "who is the propitiation for our sins," and who is, in the most impressive and affecting manner, represented to us, *under that character*, in the Sacrament of his body broken and his blood shed for the *express purpose* of the *remission* of sins!

It is not to be believed that the best Christians who have ever lived, the primitive Christians themselves, who so frequently received the Holy Sacrament, never, after receiving it, relapsed into sin; because perfection is not the lot of humanity; and can it be believed that such sin was unpardonable? and that they are all delivered over unto everlasting destruction? So wild an opinion cannot seriously be entertained; for what would this be but to say, that the *institution of Jesus*, even where it has been best observed, has acted only as an instrument of death; that instead of being calculated for the promotion of our happiness and salvation, it is a snare to entrap us to our misery and ruin! You cannot for a moment entertain so impious a thought, but observe only to *what* such reasoning *tends*.

But why in the case of obedience to a positive command should we, (in a manner so contrary to our general practice, and the ordinary performance of our other religious duties,) why should we be so forward to apprehend that "God will be extreme to mark what is done amiss?" Why should we not rather hope, by renewing our covenant with God, to be confirmed in goodness, and to receive a more ample portion of his grace? No man

was ever so prepared to draw near to God in any duty of religion but that there was still *some latent* ill in the recesses of his bosom, some unperceived defect in the *degree* of his preparation. Erring and sinful creatures we must always be, while we remain in this state of probation, but if we prepare ourselves as well as we can, our gracious Master will exact no more. A real sorrow for our transgressions—a sincere intention to live better for the future—a grateful sense of the blessings procured for us by our Saviour's sacrifice, are not requisites of such arduous difficulty as to alarm any but a thoroughly corrupted mind. And yet what is beyond these, that is of absolute necessity?

Let me not be thought to lower the dignity of this sacred ceremony, or derogate from its awful character, if I declare my opinion, that any person, who can, "out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned" *conscientiously* offer up the petitions contained in the Lord's Prayer, is in a condition of mind by no means improper for receiving the Sacrament: it is thus I would prove my position. To offer up this prayer in the name of Him who taught it, without faith in that name, would be a mockery of God. To pray that "His will may be done in earth as it is in heaven," unless we are *ourselves earnestly bent* upon *doing* that will, would be a mockery of God. It would be a mockery of God to ask of *Him* our daily bread, unless we have an entire dependance on His providence for support. To implore forgiveness of trespasses, for which we feel no *real contrition*, and which we have no serious intention to relinquish, and to ask this, upon condition of forgiving those, who have injured us, if we entertain angry and revengeful passions in our hearts, would be at once an insult to our Maker, and an imprecation of *his* vengeance upon our own heads.

And what would it be but a most offensive mockery of the divine Majesty, to beseech Him not to expose us to temptation, if we are not determined to avoid it ourselves, or to implore Him to deliver us from evil, unless we are ourselves resolved not to pursue it? In order therefore *conscientiously* to offer the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, it is evident that we must have faith, piety, trust in God, repentance, hope, charity, and forgiveness of injuries. I need not therefore hesitate to repeat, that he, who has all these qualities, should not be deterred by any degree of scruple from approaching the table of the Lord.

That excellent degree of goodness, necessary for those who would be *unexceptionably prepared* for the Sacrament, can be attained *only* by the use of the Sacrament; and it is in vain to aspire to the end, without the application of the means necessary to its attainment. Two Sacraments only were instituted by our Saviour,—Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord. Of these you admit no doubt baptism to be *indispensably necessary*. *Unbaptised* you would not venture to call yourselves members of the Church of CHRIST, nor presume to claim a participation of the privileges of the *Christian covenant*. But is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper less certainly instituted by our Lord himself than that of baptism? is it less necessary to salvation? By refusing to partake of it do you less deprive yourselves of the means of grace or less relinquish the privileges of the *Christian covenant*? These are questions in which you are deeply interested;—they are important questions, and merit your most serious attention. Between these Sacraments there is this difference—the rite of baptism once performed, is for obvious reasons, never to be repeated; the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is

of continued obligation. We are at all times to partake of this Sacrament, to “shew forth the death of our Saviour” by a perpetual commemoration until his second coming.

We should, therefore, *at all times* preserve a *state of mind* not *unfitted* to this sacred solemnity. But, unfortunately, there is a very general habit of considering the Christian Religion under a partial and erroneous point of view, not as a *profession*, but merely as a *restraint*; not as an *universal motive of good conduct*, but as a *check* only on that which is *bad*! Hence, for the most part, men think themselves under no great obligation to consider it, so long as there is no violent or conspicuous deviation from rectitude; and with respect to religious service, satisfy themselves with decent external conformity, except in cases which they conceive to call for some degree of reflection and previous preparation. But let me beg you to observe that Christianity is *not* a motive of feeling which is to be called forth *only* upon set occasions, but a sentiment to be *constantly present* to the *mind*, *pervading* the whole of *life* and *manners*, and *animating* and *directing* our *daily conduct* and *business*.

There can be no reason why every Christian should not be as good one day as another, and although all are not days of public religious service, the *truly Christian mind* should *at all times* be in such a state as, upon very short notice, to be ready even for the *most solemn*. There are, notwithstanding, *seasons* properly distinguished by our Church, which call for more *particular observance*, and should excite more than ordinary *devotion*; and such are the solemn returns of those great festivals set apart in remembrance of the Nativity and Resurrection of our Lord. His *birth*, in the form of a man, was the humbling himself to a capacity of suffering death for our sakes; his *Resurrection* was

the evidence that his sufferings were accepted in the sight of God; "He died for our sins," that He might expiate them by his blood, "He rose again for our justification," that He might in his glory communicate to us the *full effect* and *fruit* of that atonement. "CHRIST our passover is slain for us, therefore let us keep the feast." But perhaps you see no very urgent reason for doing so. Will you say then that you are *without sin*, and do not *require* the benefit of any such sacrifice? that *your own merits* are sufficient to justify you in the sight of God? No. But if you actually *stand in need* of the benefit of the *sacrifice*, why will you neglect the means of applying it to your necessities?

If you were left to your *choice*, one would think you would feel the expediency of fleeing to *Him* for succour; but this act is not a matter of *choice* or discretion, it is a duty *positively* enjoined. Now, if you considered only the *character* and *authority* of the Person issuing the *command*, it *ought* to be sufficient that you were simply *commanded* to "*do this*;" but when He vouchsafes to add, "*in remembrance of Me*," you will ill support your claim to the feelings that most ennoble our nature, if you are capable of refusing to comply.

How remarkable is the disparity between the services required by the Law, and the rites appointed by the Gospel! Our Lord renders his commands to *us* as easy as possible; upon *Himself* he takes the *heavy* and *painful* part of his religion. Instead of the rite of *circumcision* He has appointed the expressive ceremony of baptism. In the place of all the costly and burthensome sacrifices of the Law, He has offered indeed *his own body on the cross*; but of *us* He requires only that we should "eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him." O shame to humanity! O disgrace to the heart of man!

that such a requisition from such a Benefactor should fail to be complied with! Are we taxed beyond our strength or power? "My father," said the Assyrian servants to their master, "my father, if the prophet had bid thee do some *great thing* wouldest thou not have done it? how much more when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean?" If our blessed Saviour, the author of all our happiness, in addition to the rite of baptism, had commanded some great and painful exertion, ought we not, without hesitation, to have made it? how much *more* when He saith unto us, "Eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Me!" Can you deny *Him* what He thus asks, who at the moment of asking it was going to lay down his life for your sakes? Can you deny *Him* a proof of your *remembrance* in itself so pleasing? in its consequences so beneficial? when He invites you to meet at his table to call to mind what He hath *done* and *suffered for you*, to look upon Him whom you have pierced, and resolve to wound and grieve Him no more—is it in any ingenuous and uncorrupted heart to turn from Him with a sullen aversion? It would have become us to reflect, that the things which *we* contemplate with *indifference* or *dislike*, the *angels of God desire to look into*.

It may undoubtedly be sufficient for us to know the *effect* of our Saviour's acts, to know that if we obey Him the object of these services and these Sacraments will be fulfilled to us, in a manner which we cannot now apprehend; that we shall be admitted into those mansions, which He is gone into heaven "to prepare," and "shall eat and drink at his table in his kingdom." But what must be the situation of our minds if they cannot be awakened by these glorious hopes? If there be in us any of that *spirit* which becomes rational creatures—if

any of that *feeling* which should belong to creatures endued with moral sensibility—we shall rouse ourselves from this disgraceful apathy, and think and act like men!

Let us suppose for a moment that our country were invaded and overrun by some foreign power, from whose rapacity and cruelty we had everything the most horrible to apprehend, and whom we were utterly unable to resist. In this dreadful situation, let us suppose that some illustrious hero had devised the means, though *with certain destruction to himself*, of rescuing us from impending ruin, and restoring us to happiness and independence. Let us suppose him to have completed his glorious design—to have met *his own death* and accomplished *our deliverance*. Lastly, let us suppose that this self-devoted hero had asked of his countrymen, that they would preserve the memory of this act of affection, by some *set form* of grateful *commemoration*. Is there a man deserving the name of a man who would not place his *pride* and his *delight* in *observing* the solemnity? Would anything short of disgrace and detestation attend them, who could coldly neglect so interesting an observance? I need not make the application: simply I shall observe, that the *case* which has been *supposed* falls infinitely *short* of what has been done for the deliverance and happiness of mankind by their glorious and adorable Redeemer! All the pretences, the excuses, the scruples, with which they who decline this *commemoration* are eager to surround themselves, sink down and vanish before this great consideration! For how can they forbear to see, that the *more numerous* their *sins* have been, in the *greater* need do they stand of the *atoning sacrifice*! the *greater* their *gratitude for the atonement* should be! and consequently the *greater* their *eagerness to avail them-*

selves of it, by partaking of this rite, declaring their acceptance of it, and putting in their *claim*, as it were, to its signal *benefits*!

But let it not be thought that the duty is incumbent *chiefly* upon persons of *this* description. The young and inexperienced, who having received confirmation, have just entered upon their course of Christian life, are deeply interested in this question. To them I would most earnestly recommend the early cultivation of the religious affections, and a frequent attendance at the table of the Lord, as their best protection against the allurements of vice, and their most direct path to the true enjoyment of this world, as well as to the happiness of that which is to come. Never, I beseech you, so far degrade your own understandings, and delude your own souls, as to imagine that you are not yet old enough, or serious enough, or not enough prepared for the performance of your *duty*. There is no season of life in which it is not *happier*, as well as safer, to be wise and good, than to be profligate and wicked. Never be deterred by *false shame* from doing what you know to be right. The *fear* of ridicule is, at your age, the most dangerous snare for your virtue, and if you have not the good sense and fortitude to resist it, you are ruined. Guard yourselves against its baneful influence by keeping in mind these awful words of our Saviour: "Whoever is *ashamed* of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." I return to the general consideration of the subject, and, after all that has been said, I ask—how are we to describe the *constant* and *determined neglect* of this *positive injunction* of our Lord? Is it direct contempt? Is it sullen contumacy? Is it insensibility of the most

obdurate, ingratitude of the most disgraceful kind? God forbid that it should *intentionally* be all or any of these! Let us more charitably hope that the prevailing motive, in most cases, is the *dread* of *doing wrong*. But being *so afraid* of doing *wrong*, why are you not *more desirous* of doing right? To *abstain* from what is *forbidden* is one part of our duty undoubtedly, but to *do* what is *commanded* is another, and surely a not less essential branch! You have too great a veneration for your Saviour, to place yourself in a situation willingly to offend Him; and therefore what follows? you refuse to comply with his express and positive command. You have too great a veneration for this sacred institution, to hazard the violation of it by a *light*, or *inconsiderate*, or *unprepared* participation—and therefore you are determined *not* to *prepare* yourself at all!

But is it not something extraordinary, that they who are *so much* afraid of offending their Saviour by taking the Sacrament without due preparation, should yet have so little fear of offending Him by refusing to take it altogether! If the former apprehension be proper, how do they contrive to divest themselves of the latter? or, having so *strong* a sense of their imperfections, how does it happen that they have so *weak* a sense of their duty? or, with a tenderness of conscience, which tells them they are unworthy to partake in this sacred rite, how do they contrive to combine the obduracy of heart, which can determine them to *continue so*? That a man should make himself easy under the constant neglect of a positive duty, by the plea that he is not good enough to perform it—that, from the apprehension of incurring guilt, he should live constantly in the breach of an acknowledged obligation—that for fear of offending his Maker, he should uniformly disobey Him, is a paradox

in the conduct of the human understanding, which can only be solved by reference to the human heart—that heart which, yet unpurified by religion, “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

I fear I have fatigued your attention—I will therefore dismiss the argument with the best recommendation that I can give it to your serious reflection.

If you have any *real* veneration for your Saviour, or value for the benefits He hath procured for you—if you have any regard for the welfare of your own souls—if you have any dread of the displeasure of ALMIGHTY GOD “declared against all impenitency and hardness of heart,” you will not *persevere* in a *neglect* which cannot but be highly offensive to Him: for what can be *more* offensive, than, when He kindly invites you to his table, to *decline* the invitation? What can be *more* offensive, than, when He calls you into his presence, to refuse your attendance? What can be *more* offensive, than, when He vouchsafes to offer, with his own hand, the most invaluable favours and distinctions, contemptuously to reject them? To act thus, is not only to *violate* the *command* which enjoined you to “*do this*,” but to set at *nought* that *mercy* and *goodness*, which *this very office* exhibits in the *most conspicuous and most peculiar manner*.

1

THE LAMB OF GOD.

BY THE

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ST. JOHN I. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

THIS was the testimony of John to Jesus, delivered, as the context informs us, not once only, but day after day; not in public only, when he was surrounded by listening multitudes, or solemnly questioned by the rulers of his people, but in private, when engaged in familiar converse with one or two of his followers, whose movements cost him no uneasiness, but were rather regarded as the fulfilment of his most ardent desires, when, immediately on hearing these words, they followed Him of whom he spake.

Such, too, is the aim of every true servant of CHRIST, with respect to those whom he may be called by God's providence to address. To-day, to-morrow, and the day following, in public assemblies, and in private intercourse, when standing before rulers, or addressing his poorer brethren—to all classes who may be brought within the reach of his ministrations, the soldiers, the publicans, the lawyers, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the whole multitude who surround him on occasions like the present, saying, at least by profession, "What must we do to be saved?" he can but reply with John, "Behold the Lamb of God;" and happy will he be if they become

followers, not of *him* merely, (for that would be poor recompense to one who would win souls,) but of *JESUS*!

Let *us* then, with these mutual desires, and with earnest prayers that God would by his illuminating Spirit, both open our eyes and fix our attention, while so glorious an object is before us, inquire

I. What is signified by this representation of our Lord to us, under the character of a *Lamb*; and

II. To what purpose we are exhorted to *behold* Him.

I. The Lamb is familiar to us all, as an image of innocence, gentleness, and meek endurance; in all which respects it applies most exactly to the person and character of our Saviour, who, as invested with the attributes of God, was innocence and holiness itself, and before men so conducted himself that his most cruel persecutors could find no fault in Him; whose office it was to make reconciliation between God and man, and diffuse peace and harmony both in earth and heaven; whose whole deportment was mild and gentle, not lifting up the voice or crying in the streets, but influencing the minds of men by acts of mercy and benevolence; and who, in the end, was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so He opened not his mouth.

All this was a part, and a most important one, of the office He undertook for man, of the perfect work which He was to accomplish, in obedience to the requirements of God's most righteous law: but more than this would surely present itself to the minds of those who heard St. John, when a young man, who came, like the rest, to be baptized of Him, was pointed out to them as the Lamb of God, that should take away the sin of the world.

What had the Lamb, however innocent, and gentle, and patient, to do with the *taking away of sin*? This

last signification of the Lamb was doubtless as familiar to *them* as any of the former can be to *us*, accustomed as we have been to them from our infancy,—and as it would naturally be the *uppermost* in *their* thoughts when such words were uttered, so I conceive it was designed to be in *ours*,—even the innocence and meekness of our Lord, important as they are in themselves, and inseparably connected with this part of his office, falling far into the background as objects of devout contemplation, in comparison with what He undertook and performed in relation to the *taking away of sin*.

What ideas, then, on this solemn subject would be presented by the words of St. John to those who heard him?

They were used from their earliest years to behold the lamb, as appointed of God for a *sin offering*—as slain on the altar in place of him who brought it—and who confessing his sins with his hands laid on its head, was understood by that act to have figuratively transferred the guilt which before was on himself, to the animal, which God was pleased to accept in his stead, and being sprinkled with its blood by the priest, who slew it before his face, was forgiven those offences, which would otherwise have excluded him from the congregation of Israel.

This substitution of an innocent victim, (a lamb, or some other living creature,) in place of the sinner who offered it, and who thus acknowledged that his own life was forfeited to the justice of God, and spared only by his merciful acceptance of the appointed sacrifice, ran through the whole course of Jewish worship. It was instituted, in all likelihood, immediately after the fall of our first parents and the promise of a Saviour, who should reverse the consequences of their sin. It was his compliance with this institution which rendered Abel's offering more acceptable than Cain's. Noah

thus declared his gratitude on going forth from the ark. Abraham was most impressively taught its efficacy in the provision of a ram instead of his son Isaac, whom his hand was already stretched forth to slay. And, from the patriarchs, whom we find constantly resorting to it, it was universally diffused throughout the heathen nations, among which there is scarcely one so rude as not to have some notion of the sacrifice of animal life, as a means of taking away sin, and appeasing the anger of God. It was a perversion of this doctrine, through the craft of Satan, which led to the offering up of the fruit of the body, as the most valuable gift which could be presented, for the sin of the soul; and the general testimony of the world has been in full accordance with that of the Word of God, and the ancient institutions of his Church,—that “without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Behold, then, said the Baptist, to a people fully impressed with this truth,—to those before whose eyes such sacrifices were continually offered,—now for the cleansing of their personal transgressions,—now for the purifying of holy places,—now for the iniquities of their whole nation,—“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of *the world*.”

What meaning could they, or can we, attach to such words, but this, that the person thus pointed out to view was set apart of God to do the same for the world at large, which was done by the lamb in these instances, for themselves or their nation; that is, to stand, though innocent, in place of the guilty;—to bear by imputation the burden of their sins;—to suffer at the hand of God the punishment which those sins had deserved, and which the sinner must personally have suffered had no such substitute been ordained; and so to make a

way for his escape from their guilt and condemnation, according to the words of the law, "He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him;" or, according to the interpretation of the Jewish types by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "It was necessary that the *patterns* of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these—wherefore once at the end of the world hath CHRIST appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The allusion of the Baptist would of course be more or less intelligible, (as indeed would the types themselves,) according as the minds of his hearers were more or less spiritual, earnest in their expectation of the Redemption of Israel, and attentive to the prophecies which spake of Him. Few, probably, would clearly understand it at the time—but it was intended to awaken attention, and to lead those who heard it (as was the case with the two disciples mentioned in verse 37,) to inquire for themselves, and learn from his own lips the character and office of Him, who though so little distinguished amongst others at present by any external appearances, was described in so remarkable language by their present instructor.

On them, as they followed on to know the truth, the light as to his true character grew brighter and brighter; to us, also, by their testimony, its historical evidence is most clear and distinct; and the same process of honest and persevering inquiry, the same determination, from what we have heard of CHRIST from others, to follow

his footsteps, and become acquainted with Him for ourselves, is alone wanting to secure for us the yet more invaluable evidence of internal perception, as to the nature of his mediatorial office, and the infinite value of his atoning sacrifice. Let us then consider further,

II. *To what purpose* we are exhorted to *behold* the Lamb of God. The exhortation, I think, intimates,

1. The intense *degree* and *kind* of attention which it behoves us to pay to the object thus set before us.

It was certainly not the glance of mere curiosity which the Baptist was anxious to direct to the Saviour; not the listless gaze which scarcely *amounts* to curiosity, but, having beheld the object for a moment, easily suffers a hundred others to intervene and efface it altogether from thought: no, he would have the attention fixed and steadfast, as if he had said to the multitudes around him, "You come forth to me in the desert, confessing your sins, and professing a desire to forsake them, and I have baptized you with the baptism of repentance. But this alone is not sufficient: besides confession and repentance, the law requires *an offering*. Behold, then, *the Lamb of God*: mark that young man, now conversant amongst you in great humility; despise not his lowly circumstances; look not upon Him as without form and comeliness for which He should be desired; lose not sight of Him among the crowd; observe every step of his progress; Him hath God selected and ordained as the sacrifice which alone He will accept for your sins. He is now set apart, as was the victim lamb, that his purity may be tried and manifested till the time of offering shall come. Note well his spotless life, but especially note every point and circumstance of its close. Call off your attention from every meaner object: He dies for the sin of the world!"

And, oh ! if such an address, if the simple words of the text, would be calculated to awaken the most earnest observation, to excite the most diligent inquiry, when the pretensions of our Lord were as yet unknown, when He who was thus pointed out appeared but as the son of Joseph, what attention should they awaken in us ; how inexcusable is a single moment of indifference, when we know that He to whom these words relate—He who thus lived a life of trial, and died a death of shame—was assuredly the Son of the Highest ; that the purchase of redemption for GOD's heritage is said to have been made with no less a price than His own blood.

2. Heeding, then, the demand on our closest and most reverential attention to the facts connected with our Saviour's sacrifice, both from the dignity of the object set forth to our view, and the deep interest we possess individually in this wonderful transaction, let us further endeavour to enter into the feelings with which a devout worshipper under the old covenant would regard the victim-lamb, and to appropriate them as our own, in reference to JESUS, the Lamb of God.

(1.) Would not the thoughts of such an one, while standing before the altar, and beholding the lamb, on the head of which he had just laid his hands and confessed his transgressions, expiring beneath the knife of the priest, and pouring forth its blood on his account, be directed in sorrow and shame to *the sins which had caused this sacrifice* ? Would he not behold, in the sufferings of the innocent victim, a representation of what he had himself deserved to suffer, and be disposed to say to his soul, "Here, then, is thy portraiture ; such, alas ! is the situation to which thou hast been reduced by sin—bound and helpless, thy life a forfeit to God's violated law, the sword of his just indignation stretched

out to destroy thee, thy blood devoted to the dust, thy whole frame as an accursed thing, to be cast out and consumed from the presence of God!"

And should not such humble thoughts possess thee, O sinner, who beholdest the Lamb of God in the act of sustaining the sin of the world? Canst thou trifle with sin, when thou considerest the greatness of the sacrifice which was necessary for its removal? Can the very least of thy transgressions, as thou esteemest them,—thy listlessness as to spiritual things,—thy love of pleasure or profit rather than God,—thy reluctance, in any respect, to submit thy will to His,—be indeed light matters in the sight of Him, who, to reclaim thee from this state of alienation, and lay open a way of forgiveness for thy past unprofitableness, thought no less an atonement necessary than the death of his well-beloved Son? And, if so heinous in His sight, should these things appear trifles in thine? If He so keenly apprehended thy danger, so greatly desired thy rescue, as not to spare even his only Son for thy sake, shouldst thou sport on the brink of that pit from whence his death could alone deliver thee? Oh! look to the Garden of Gethsemane and behold the Lamb of God bearing the sins of the world, and all but sinking under the intolerable load; and then think what it must be to bear thy sins on thine own head, with no possibility that the cup of woe should pass from thee! Behold Him on the cross, enduring the sharpest sufferings of body and mind which the malice of Satan could invent, and then think what must be the misery of a soul abandoned to Satan as his lawful prey, because it has refused the aid of that Saviour who alone could bruise the serpent's head! Hear him in his last agony, exclaiming, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" and then think

what must be thy mournful doom when expiring with sin unrepented of and unpardoned, and forsaken of thine offended God, not for a few moments, but for ever!

Nowhere is the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the severity as well as the goodness of God, discovered so clearly as in the sufferings of the Lamb of God in the character of a victim for the sin of the world. And oh, that the thoughtless trifler who now sports with his own deceivings, could be brought so to behold in this awful spectacle, the representation of his own deserts, of his own certain doom, if he *continue* thoughtless and impenitent, that the purposes of his heart might be changed, his conscience be smitten with a sense of the danger, the guilt, the ingratitude of thus returning neglect for love—contempt for condescension, and his whole soul be subdued to feelings of deep and godly sorrow—to earnest supplication for forgiveness, to anxious inquiry as to the means of escape from the dreadful guilt of having crucified the Saviour afresh.

(2.) Are any such amongst us? Blessed be God, you are bidden to behold the Lamb of God, not only as a victim, but a substitute, not only as having taken, but taken *away* the sin of the world. The spiritual worshipper in the Temple, who had laid his hand on the head of the sacrifice, confessing his trespasses, and who afterwards saw it slain on the altar, saw *more* than a repetition of his own merited sufferings, he saw also the means of their removal; the means whereby the guilt which had deserved them, was purged and blotted out.—“Thus,” he might say to his soul, “hast thou deserved to perish, but since God has appointed and accepted a sacrifice in thy stead, thus shalt thou *never* perish. The lamb dies that thou mayest not die; thy guilt has been laid on his head, that it may never

be visited on thine own; he has borne the curse that thou mayest regain the favour of God,—be admitted to fellowship with Him, and enjoy all the privileges of his people.”

And thus mayest thou, who, contrite and broken-hearted for thy manifold and manifest offences, hast laid thy hand with trembling hope on the head of the Lamb of God, believing that in the sin of the world for which He died, thy personal guilt is included; that in the promise of rest to all who are heavy laden, thou hast [a part, if thou accept the invitation to come and ask of Him; thus mayest *thou* be released from the load of guilt which thou hast contracted, however great and aggravated; thus be admitted to a state of reconciliation with God; thus derive strength to go and sin no more; to walk humbly with thy God on earth, and hereafter to be with Him where He is, and behold his glory. For “God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;” and “He that spared not his only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also, with Him, freely give us all things?”

(3.) Behold, then, the Lamb of God, in the last place, as *the pledge of present and future happiness, the incentive to unbounded thankfulness*. When the victim had been slain, and the parts more immediately appropriated to God and his ministers set aside, the offerer was, in many instances, under the Levitical dispensation, permitted to partake of the rest with his friends and neighbours, feasting on the sacrifice with joy and gladness of heart, and rendering thanks to God for his goodness in accepting his offering, and turning away his anger from him. And in this way is the man who has beheld the Lamb of God, with sorrow for the sins which have pierced

Him, yet with faith in his sufficiency to atone for those sins, and subdue and remove them, encouraged to behold the Saviour as the source of unfailing supply for all his wants; furnishing a perpetual feast for the soul from his inexhaustible fulness; uniting it in communion with God and with all his people; imparting strength for the journey of life, succour in the last conflict, and victory over the last enemy.

Nor even here will the eyes of the true believer be withdrawn from that glorious object which has fixed their gaze below. For under the same image in which He has drawn forth their repentance, and sustained their faith, and confirmed their love below, the Saviour is represented as dispensing the enjoyments and receiving the homage of the glorified saints above. They sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb; the Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne feedeth them, and leadeth them to fountains of living water; and they cast their crowns at his feet, and praise Him with harps of gold, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

Once again then, we say with the Baptist, to all classes of our hearers, "Behold the Lamb of God;" behold Him, thoughtless sinner, vain disputer of this world, self-sufficient boaster in your own imagined merits, and tremble at the guilt of rejecting the sacrifice which God has provided, the only one of sufficient worth to prevent the very least of your transgressions from sinking you to eternal perdition. Stand astonished at your past unconcern while so amazing an instance of the Divine

mercy has been exhibited to your view, dread to tamper for a moment with that accursed thing which God hateth; to trifle for a moment with that mercy in which God delighteth; to provoke that most dreadful of all inflictions, the penalty of despised compassion and forbearance,—the wrath of the Lamb.

Behold Him, repentant suppliant, and cast aside your fears; though your sins be as scarlet, believe that they shall be white as snow; and having been much forgiven, love much, and let your whole life be a sacrifice of self to His service, who has given Himself for you.

Behold Him, sincere and humble believer, for your comfort under tribulation, for the renewal of your strength in temptation, for the establishment of your faith in his promises, for the increase of your resemblance to his glorious image. Behold Him, daily and hourly, your pattern and lawgiver no less than your Substitute and Saviour. Let not the highest of created objects draw off your attention from Him, nor the most pressing of earthly occupations interfere with your privilege of praising and adoring Him.

So may you at the hour of death commend your soul into the hands of a faithful Creator, in assured confidence that being “washed in the blood of that immaculate Lamb that was slain to take away the sin of the world, and all its earthly defilements being purged and done away, it shall be presented pure and without spot before Him,” to whom, the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory and honour, now and evermore.

THE WORLD OVERCOME BY FAITH.

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE

REV. W. K. CLAY, B.D.,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF THE HOLY TRINITY, ELY.

1 ST. JOHN v. 4.

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

ONE great object, which St. John had here in view, was to assure all men, that the profession of the Gospel has nothing whatever to do with indolence and inactivity: that, instead of believing in CHRIST being the only thing necessary, it is incumbent on those, who are called by His name, and who appear to have taken up His cross, to pass a busy and a watchful life. Nor is the beloved disciple the only one of the sacred writers, who has given us this notion of the Christian's duty; nor the only one, who has compared the earnestness demanded of us to that, which we should naturally display, if engaged in personal contests one with another. For, when reading the New Testament attentively, it is quite impossible to avoid noticing the different ways, in which the Christian is considered as striving for the mastery over sin. At one time he is commanded to "run* with patience the race that is set before him;" at another, to fight, but "not† as one that beateth the air;" again, he is reminded of the enemies with whom he has to "wrestle‡," and, being told to

* Heb. xii. 1.

† 1 Cor. ix. 26.

‡ Ephes. vi. 12.

“fight* the good fight of faith,” he is exhorted to “endure† hardness as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST.”

Now this constant allusion to a state of contention is a clear sign, not merely that we are called upon to make our election sure, and to shew our meetness to partake of the blessedness of the Gospel, by an unvarying course of exertion, but it seems equally a proof, that the work is at once difficult and important—that the enemies, whom we have to encounter, and to subdue, are mighty—that the warfare which we have to wage, and the victory we have to win, require us to exert every diligence, rather than for one moment to give way to sloth. But, notwithstanding the declarations of scripture, notwithstanding the frequent exhortations therein written, notwithstanding also those sentiments, which we cannot avoid entertaining, whenever we really meditate on this subject, there are few things, which we strive more assiduously, and more perversely, to keep out of sight, than the importance of this diligence. To too many of us there would appear to be no necessity for it. They do not take heed to the apostle’s words‡, that they must be “sober” and “vigilant,” because their spiritual “adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;” for they do not perceive, that they have any spiritual adversary. Ignorant of their nature being corrupt, or, at all events, unwilling to acknowledge the truth of this doctrine, they do not understand, that the warfare, in which they are to engage, is a warfare with their own lusts, a warfare with their own thoughts, and with the imaginations of their own hearts, a warfare, also, with all the unholy enticements of the world, with its impure pleasures, and its unchristian enjoyments. Thus, this indispensable part of true religion, this part

* 1 Tim. vi. 12.

† 2 Tim. ii. 3.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 8.

which can alone test the purity, and the sincerity, of faith in the Saviour, is entirely and unhesitatingly omitted. And it is to this lamentable perversion of the object and design of Christianity, that we owe the immense amount of wickedness and impurity, which we behold around us: it is, moreover, to the same cause, that we must attribute the numerous sins, which are daily committed, and which are esteemed light and trivial, though they are really as much opposed to the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, as the most flagrant and heinous transgressions.

To appear, then, in this place at proper intervals is not the only thing demanded of us by the God, whom we profess to serve, or by the Saviour, whom we seem to venerate; nor is the whole of our duty comprised in following, with listlessness, perhaps, and indolence, the prayers, which are here offered up. Our service is anything but that "reasonable service," which is expected from Christians, if we are seen upon our knees only in this temple of the living God, (and how few of us, I may add, are seen upon our knees even here!)—our labour is not ended, if we utter vows of faithfulness and obedience only in this holy sanctuary—our worship is not completed merely by desiring, whilst here, that our faith may be strengthened, that our hearts may be purified, that our affections may be enlarged, that our souls may be guided, and supported, and sanctified—merely by acknowledging in our religious assemblies, that to God all our secret thoughts are known, all our repeated sins are disclosed, and that through CHRIST alone the thoughts of our hearts can be forgiven, and our sins blotted out. By no means: we have all to go out into the world—we have all to mix up ourselves, more or less intimately, with the affairs of the world—we have all to take part in the allowable amusements, and to be exposed to the temptations, of the world. Hence

it is, that we are cautioned so earnestly, that we are warned so repeatedly, to “take* heed lest” we “fall,” to “hold fast† the profession of *our* faith without wavering,” to “watch‡ and pray lest” we “enter into temptation,” to be “steadfast§, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” to “walk circumspectly||,” and to be “redeeming the time.” These passages of scripture, and innumerable others which might be quoted, are all designed to remind us of the active nature of Christianity, and to impress upon us the certainty, that we shall meet with many and difficult impediments in our course, that we shall experience violent and constant opposition to our progress in holiness. However, as our Saviour was, in his human nature, to be perfected through sufferings¶, so must we undergo similar trials; and, by denying ourselves, that, whatsoever we do, we may “do all to the glory of God,” so must we also advance towards the measure of the divine fulness, so must we also hasten towards the enjoyment of the kingdom of Heaven.

And, “if ye know these things,” my brethren, (there are none, I trust, among you, who are ignorant of them,) “happy are ye, if ye do them”—if you are aware, that activity, and zeal, and carefulness, and diligence, and sincerity, and earnestness, are required of you, happy are you, if you endeavour to exert these qualities, and thus press toward the mark for the prize of your high calling, even the salvation of your souls. It is a mighty contest, in which you, and I, and all mankind, are engaged; and in proportion to its greatness and importance is the reward, which will follow on success, as well as the punishment, which will accompany failure: “the righteous shall be

* 1 Cor. x. 12.

† Heb. x. 23.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 41.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

|| Ephes. v. 15, 16.

¶ Heb. ii. 10.

had in everlasting remembrance*" before GOD in heaven, while to the wicked will be reserved in hell "the blackness of darkness for ever†."

What, however, are we to understand by "the world," which St. John informs us must be "overcome"? The world, as we very well know, is generally put to signify the whole human race, with the earth that we all inhabit, and this without any reference to excellence or the reverse. In scripture, on the contrary, it is not so, and by the world is there almost always understood the wicked, those unsanctified and evil-minded persons, who care not for religion, nor for its laws, who say in their hearts "*there is no God,*" persons, who live after their own imaginations, and who walk after the sight of their own eyes. In this meaning our blessed Lord employed the word, when He cautioned his disciples against yielding to despondency, as often as they met with obstacles in that course, upon which they were about to enter. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it *hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own‡:" that is, if ye were given to unholy and irreligious practices, even as others are, ye would be loved by them, "but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." So, also, St. James§, "Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." By the world we are, moreover, to understand all that pertains to, this earth, all that is perishable and fading, all that is calculated merely to gratify our appetites, and to satisfy our bodily desires, all, in short, that tends to promote, and to afford,

* Ps. cxii. 6.

† Jude 13.

‡ John xv. 18, 19.

§ iv. 4.

temporary pleasures. For St. John* bids us "love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world," since, he adds, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

Such is the world, and such the nature of our warfare. We are to set ourselves uniformly and firmly against the counsels, and exhortations, and persuasions, and examples, of the wicked: we are to reject them, as unbecoming men "baptized† in the name of the LORD JESUS," as contrary to our profession, and detrimental to our hopes of immortality. Again, we are to take no delight in gratifications, and enjoyments, and pleasures, which God has forbidden: we are not to desire anything, which He has condemned: whatsoever in the days of our ignorance we gave ourselves up to, we are at length to abandon and abhor, if we really covet the glories of heaven. For he that "is born of God overcometh the world;" he, at least, is zealous and earnest in this labour; he, at least, counts it that employment, which alone is worthy of his solicitude, that work, which ought to engage all his thoughts, and all his care. Besides, whosoever does this with sincerity and with truth, and is actuated by the spirit peculiar to his Christian profession, the divine grace will assuredly bless his endeavours, and crown them with success.

But, my brethren, as the course of life proper for us has been marked out in the scriptures, as the end we should pursue has been there declared, it behoves us frequently to examine our own actions, and inquire what

* 1 John ii. 15, 16, 17.

† Acts viii. 16.

progress we have made towards that victory, which the Gospel enjoins us to gain. We are obliged, as I said before, to mix up ourselves with the world: we are compelled to associate with the evil men, who have their portion in this life, and to whom the words of Scripture are "as idle tales," which they neither wish, nor strive, to believe. Hence, of necessity, we are exposed to various trials and temptations in this probationary state, and these trials and temptations, in whatever shape they come, we must satisfactorily undergo, and perseveringly resist. The world, in short, is to be overcome: do we overcome it? do we even endeavour to overcome it? and yet thus only can we be proved to be the sons of God, and heirs of the promised kingdom*. "Blessed is the man," says the Psalmist, "that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Are we the possessors of this blessedness? It is to our everlasting happiness to be so; still, we are far, very far, from this condition, if the gospel of salvation is ever lightly esteemed, if the redemption, which it proclaims, is at any time dishonoured, or in any manner contemned, if "the blood of JESUS CHRIST†," which "cleanseth from all sin," is not duly valued, and if the sacraments and ordinances, which He established, are neglected. Sentiments like these are a sure sign, that we have not overcome the world: practices in agreement with these sentiments are a manifest proof, that we may understand indeed the value of religion, but that we are unwilling to conform to it, being more disposed to follow the multitude to do evil, than to imitate the behaviour of those, who know and love the truth.

* Jam. ii. 5.

† 1 John i. 7.

He, therefore, has not overcome the world, who feels any shame in acknowledging himself a follower of JESUS CHRIST; who with the Psalmist* does not experience joy, when it is said unto him, "Let us go into the house of the LORD;" who, from fear of being exposed to ridicule, refuses to exhibit any marks of devotion and of genuine piety, either within or without these holy walls; who avoids every indication of a humble and teachable disposition; who resolutely banishes from his conversation, and even from his thoughts, all notice of his Almighty Creator, and of his Divine Redeemer; who never manifests delight in the law of the LORD by at any time taking the Bible into his hand, that he may be instructed and improved; who, in public, appears not to join in the prayers which are offered up to heaven, and from whose lips, in private, no petitions proceed, which may draw down a blessing on his labours, or thank the divine providence for merciful protection during the day; who, in short, lives, as if he needed no Saviour but himself, as if his own right hand, and his own arm, were all he wanted to protect him. He, my brethren, who acts in this manner, has *not* overcome the world.

Nor can he be said to have overcome it, who gives himself up to the passions and lusts of the flesh; who delights in indulging his appetites, how vile soever they may be; who thinks, that he may on every occasion do after the sight of his own eyes, and, though he does not think so, in his boldness and his impiety is resolved to act, as if he did; who deems it no crime to indulge in drunkenness; and who takes the name of GOD upon his lips, as often as he wishes to procure faith to some trivial matter, or, perhaps, even to a lie.

* cxxii. 1.

Again, he certainly has not overcome the world, who violates designedly the truth; who cares not whether his words are entitled to belief, or whether they are not; who gives way on any occasion to deceit or false dealing; who takes no care to avoid all that may injure his neighbours and acquaintances; who abhors not slander and detraction; who subdues not every tendency to envy, and malice, and evil-speaking, and pride; who does not root out from his heart all uncharitableness, and hatred, and every feeling, which is adverse to the purity of the Gospel.

It may now be asked, if the work of religion is so extensive, and so mighty, who are they, that can perform it? who can hope to be saved? who can expect to prevail in the contest, wherein we are obliged to engage? No one, by his own strength: no one, who goes forth relying on mere human aid, and on the mere force of his own good resolutions. To conquer the power of the devil, for he it is that rules "the darkness of this world," and animates the bad men who dwell in it, there is need of a heavenly principle, of a divine support, of an assistance, which partakes not of the earth, nor belongs to it. We must rather "put on the whole armour of God*," and thus enable ourselves to stand in the evil day "against the wiles of the devil." Particularly, however, are we enjoined to take "the shield of faith," as a weapon which can protect us from "all the fiery darts of the wicked," or, in plainer words, as that mighty influence, which is able to keep us safe both from the temptations of the ungodly, and from the suggestions of our own corrupted hearts.

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world,"

* Ephes. vi. 11, &c.

says St. John, "*even* our faith;" then, in order that no one may hesitate as to the kind of faith to which he refers, he adds, "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that **JESUS** is the Son of God?" Here, my brethren, is declared to us the true source of Christian perfection, the real cause of every advancement in holiness; the origin, and motive even, for striving to attain to the possession of the evangelical purity, and of the evangelical graces. For "he that believeth that **JESUS** is the Son of God," can he do so without, at the same time, bearing in mind, and believing, the whole scheme of our redemption? can he do so, and not remember, how this same **JESUS** came down from heaven, and suffered every privation, and endured every indignity, and every pain, that each one of us might be reconciled to God, and by His blood rendered meet to enter into happiness and immortality? Can he do so, moreover, and not feel conscious, that sin, which could not be expiated without so great a sacrifice, is to be the object of his abhorrence, and of his detestation? And when any one of us has made this progress in the *doctrines* of Christianity, it surely then becomes an easy thing to resolve, with God's assistance, to perform the *duties* of Christianity.

If, on the contrary, we are unwilling to acknowledge the truth contained in the words of St. John, that faith "is the victory that overcometh the world," how will it be possible for us to devote ourselves to the service of Him, who is "of purer * eyes than to behold evil"? how will it be possible for us to be earnest and anxious in furthering the design of the Gospel, which is to banish all impurity and wickedness from the face of the earth?

* Hab. i. 10.

For, if we believe not, that sin brought death temporal upon the Son of God, we certainly shall not be persuaded, that sin will bring death eternal upon ourselves. And, assuredly, it is the want of this faith, that causes iniquity and all uncleanness to abound. Which of us, indeed, ever saw the world overcome, its enticements rejected and hated, by those who cared not for the things of religion? which of us ever beheld the fair fruits of virtue, and all the amiable affections of our nature, to flourish in those, who looked not beyond this world for a recompense, or who thought not, that they should obtain that recompense by believing in JESUS the Son of God? Rather, does not the strictness, with which the duties of the Gospel are practised, bear a close and intimate relationship to the manner, in which its doctrines are cherished? and do we not perceive, that our desires after purity are in exact proportion to the joy, and the satisfaction, which is experienced by us at the mercies of redemption?

Let us take, however, our own selves; since there are some of us, I trust, who have been roused from a state of unconcern, to desire seriously the love of God, and to rest humbly on the merits of His Son. Have we not been conscious, that, as we advanced in knowledge, so also we advanced in holiness? that, as light broke in upon our souls, so did our hearts also strive and labour in our calling? that, as the statements of the Scriptures were gradually received by faith, so also did we go forward more and more in our Christian course? Doubtless, some of us have had this experience: doubtless, some of us have really observed, that a connexion, such as St. John insists on, exists; that faith and practice are but parts of one whole, and that they mutually influence, and promote, each other. And, if we know this truth, if we

have felt its value and its importance, if we have ascertained its powerful effect in rendering us holier and happier, if we have understood its vast weight in bringing us near to the object of our affections, and the attainment of our hopes, if we have seen that thus we become more fit to enjoy the favour of God, may we, by the aid of the HOLY SPIRIT, continually go on increasing; may we unceasingly press forward in our career; may we without delay, and without hesitation, serve the living and the faithful God in the way which He requires; may we be diligent in reading the Scriptures, diligent in prayer, diligent in meditation, diligent in self-examination, that, at length, our firm and efficacious faith may evince, that we also are "born of God," because we also are by Him enabled to overcome the world.

NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BY THE

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ST. MATTHEW VI. 24.

No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other: or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

THIS is one of those forcible illustrations of a divine precept, with which the discourses of our blessed Lord abound. "No man can serve two masters." No man can with equal regard and fidelity perform a double service, and fulfil the commands of different masters. For, suppose the most favourable case—that the general habits and dispositions of two persons may coincide, and that in essentials, the service of one may not militate against that of the other; yet the possibility is not to be imagined of such a perfect unity in desire and sentiment, that what is pleasing to the one will be equally and at the same moment pleasing to the other, or that what offends the one the other also will in the same degree dislike. It must needs be then, that the man who attempts to serve them both will contract a preference for the one above the other. But suppose that instead of this general conformity there be a marked disparity between the two; that the one is temperate, patient, kind, a pious believer in JESUS CHRIST,—an humble fol-

lower in his path ; the other, profligate, unprincipled, a proud and scornful blasphemer ! How can a man serve two masters of these contrary dispositions ? Of necessity he must be unfaithful to one or both—the two services are obviously incompatible. **AND SO ARE THOSE OF “GOD AND MAMMON.”**

Now in this particular application of a general maxim, it is evident that our blessed Lord designed to shew that the service of God was at variance with that of the world ; not, indeed, that there was any incompatibility between our duty to God and our duty to man ; these are not “contrary the one to the other,” for as He elsewhere declares, they must be and can only be duly performed conjointly ; but that our religious obligations are wholly in opposition to the worship of Mammon—to the inordinate love of riches—to “covetousness which is idolatry.”

The Gospel for the day, in which the admonition of the text is found, is part of that unparalleled discourse called the Sermon from the Mount, which, when our Lord saw the great concourse of people brought together by his fame from every part of the surrounding country, He took occasion to address to them, and which comprehends the whole of practical Christianity. While then you read it once and again, as you will do if you are sincerely desirous to learn from your Saviour’s lips what, as Christians, you ought to be, you may also refer to it with advantage for the best commentary as a whole upon the particular injunction of the text. You will find that, in the opening of his address, the heavenly Teacher set himself at once to purify the minds of his followers from the dross and contamination of their natural conceptions ; to humble their sensual pride ; to exalt their affections to spiritual objects ; to the attainment of those saintly qualities to which He solemnly and

authoritatively asserts that the blessing of GOD attaches. The highest happiness of man, He teacheth, consists, not in the possession of worldly greatness, of worldly riches, of worldly enjoyments, but in the graces of the SPIRIT, and first and foremost in an humble contentment with the lot which GOD has assigned to each of us, whatever that may be. "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" they may not be among the high and noble of the earth; their brows may not shine in the lustre of an earthly diadem; but a far more exalted, a far more glorious crown is ready for them; a crown incorruptible, the splendour of which never fadeth; a crown eternal, which their Lord hath won for his saints: in His own words, "their's is the kingdom of Heaven."

Our Lord teaches also, in continuation, that even afflictions are to be borne by the Christian as occasions rather for rejoicing than for despair. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." What is the cause of their lamentation? Do they sorrow under a debasing sense of their own sinfulness? Happy are they! for that sorrow is the first step to a godly repentance. Oh! let them fondly cherish it! Precious in the sight of their heavenly Father is the tear of the penitent; and the angels do rejoice thereat. Let them go in the recollection of their Saviour's injunction, and in the strength of His grace, and sin no more, and they may take to themselves the comfortable assurance that the blood of their crucified Lord hath washed out their offences from the book of God's remembrance. Or are they borne down under the loss of some loved object? in the possession of whom they found a support and solace in this vale of tears, in which they are left to linger their appointed time alone! Let them not sorrow as men without hope. Their heaviness shall be turned into joy, if

they will but in faith and sincerity pray for grace, that it may be sanctified to them as a warning to set their house in order, so that when their end cometh they may fall asleep in JESUS, with the delightful and assured hope that they shall meet again their brethren in the Lord, who have gone before them, and be with them in glory for ever. Or whatever their afflictions may be, they must be comparatively light; they can endure as it were but for a moment, and if they bear them patiently, and receive them thankfully at the hands of their heavenly Father, and trust in His mercy for His dear Son JESUS CHRIST's sake, they shall turn to their profit, and help them forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.

Thus, then, the blessing of GOD is in these instances declared to be vouchsafed to qualities, the very last by which the ambition, or the covetousness, or any desire of worldly men, is to be gratified—to contentedness of mind, to humility of spirit: and the way to happiness to which CHRIST here points is the very opposite to that by which the sensual man would seek it; it is by self-abasement, by privation, by afflictions. And so, in continuation of his discourse, the Divine Teacher pronounces the heavenly benediction on “the *meek*,” on those who resent not injuries and forgive their enemies; on them “which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” who for their steady continuance in the faith of CHRIST incur the hatred and enmity of the world, and are reviled and despitefully used and calumniated *for their Master’s sake*, because they have the grace boldly to maintain their profession, and are ready at all times and in all places to approve themselves confirmed and consistent Christians. Happy is it indeed for them if they are called upon to suffer in such a case, or in any righteous cause; they may well “rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is

their reward in heaven!" But in all this it must be sufficiently evident that the service of CHRIST and that of the world are in their very natures totally opposite, that the principles by which the one must be regulated are essentially different from those by which the other may be satisfied; that if we look to this life only we may have admirable and brilliant qualities, and yet fall infinitely short of those graces of the SPIRIT by which we are exhorted to strive "for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS;" that there is one way by which we may "lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:" and there is another way by which we must "lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

And which, my brethren, will ye choose? Will ye live for the world? Will ye devote your energies—the strength of your bodies and the faculties of your souls? will ye rise up early and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, to satisfy the grovelling appetites of the flesh? in the pursuit of riches, to add house to house, and field to field? in the pursuit of honours, to be accounted great and glorious before men? to the attainment of those perishable vanities, none of which can you carry away with you when you die, and the dream of life may soon be over, and what will it appear in the retrospect at the morning of the Resurrection? Or will ye be animated by holier affections, to attain unto greater things than these; to the securing for yourselves that inestimable and enduring treasure, that pearl of great price which time cannot wear out, which death itself cannot destroy, which the world can neither give nor take away, which He who hath vanquished death and hath

trodden the world under his feet hath purchased for your heavenly and eternal inheritance? If ye choose the first ye will serve Mammon: if ye choose the second ye will serve GOD. Both ye cannot serve. "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon." Cast your care, then, upon GOD, my brethren, for He careth for you. Give heed to those injunctions and confide in those blessed assurances of the Lord himself which immediately follow the words of the text and with which they must be taken in connexion. Be not over anxious for the things of this life, "what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on." If GOD has given you life and bodies, He will not deny you the lesser blessings of food and clothing. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Temporal duties, no doubt, are imposed upon you. Be diligent in the discharge of them; but under a full and faithful reliance on the providence of GOD. Observe His power and goodness in the provision which He has made for the support and nurture of the least and weakest of His creatures. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Hath GOD displayed the riches of His mercy and kindness over the lesser works of His hands, and will He neglect you, the most favoured of them all, to whom He gave dominion over them, whom He formed after His own likeness, in His own image? O ye of little faith! And after all what can you do without Him—what can you effect by all your pains if He be not with you? "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" Nay! by what device can you add one hair's breadth to the height which He hath assigned to each of you? "And why take ye thought

for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Those flowers by no labour of their own are invested by God with a hue and texture which the highest perfections of human art cannot equal. And if thus these senseless and inanimate plants, which soon lose their bloom and wither—which grow to-day and to-morrow are used as fuel and cast into the oven—are yet made the objects of God's providential care—how can you doubt but that He will fulfil all your desires and petitions as may be most expedient for you? He knoweth what things ye need, and He will supply them according to the measure of your necessities, if ye "ask in faith nothing wavering." But then you must observe another admonition of your blessed Lord in this same address, and "set your affections on things above, not on things in the earth." You must not be as men without understanding—not as the Gentiles who knew not God, and whose thoughts and desires therefore were directed solely to temporal blessings—to meat, and drink, and clothing. These must not be the only—they must not be the chief objects at which you aim: "ye must seek first" and foremost "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Do ye strive and labour to attain those spiritual blessings which the establishment of the kingdom of God among us, the preaching of CHRIST's Gospel, proposes to your acceptance. Rely not on any righteousness of your own, but on *His* righteousness, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST;" and then, in due subordination to these objects of transcendent interest, be diligent in the execution of the duties which belong to your worldly calling; and doubt not but that the blessings of God will rest

upon your honest labours, and that all things will "be added unto you" whatsoever are "requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul." Remember always that the work which must take precedence of every other is the work of your salvation; and "to-day, while it is called to-day," before "the night cometh when no man can work," "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Defer not this work from day to day, as though morrow should succeed morrow, and still leave you time for its performance. Nor be over anxious for what may happen on the morrow. To you it may never come; or, if it should, no temporal object that you can possibly secure by present anxiety, can make amends for one opportunity of grace neglected. Nor can you find time hereafter to make up for present negligence. The morrow, if it should come, will bring its own cares and duties along with it, quite enough to occupy its hours. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Every day, nay every hour, has its appointed duties; the neglect of which is a great and grievous sin for which you cannot atone unto God. "Therefore, take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." While you seek for wisdom and strength from above, that the business immediately before you may be fulfilled in a manner acceptable unto God for CHRIST's sake, you will at the same time best provide and be prepared for those future exigencies which it may be the good purpose of God to bring upon you.

Such is the scriptural exposition of the admonition of the text. It is the interpretation of Scripture by Scripture; and this is the way in which the Bible should be read.

The sum and substance of its meaning is this—that

the service of God is of a pure and spiritual nature, wholly incompatible with that gross and sensual covetousness of this world's riches which is denominated the service of Mammon. There is no interdict upon the honest and diligent exercise of the means with which God has blessed us for the support of ourselves and of those who are dependent upon us, or for the improvement of our temporal condition. But in no object that we propose to ourselves must we lose sight of God. He must be present to our thoughts in all our ways and all our works. We must not engage in any undertaking upon which we dare not ask for His blessing. His service must be paramount. And if by any machinations of our spiritual enemy—by evil suggestions from within, or by evil temptations from without—we should be solicited to enlist as it were in a foreign service—this single answer must be sufficient for us, and by this we must be prepared to stand,—“The Master whom I serve forbids it!”

Finally : Be assured, my brethren, that it is by making the principle we have been discussing the rule of your life, that you will most certainly provide for your dearest interests. They who live without God in the world, who neglect His service for that of Mammon, may be surrounded by all that Mammon can give them—by riches in abundance, and all that riches can procure—power and splendour, ease and luxury. But shall these things last for ever? or is the possession of them an exemption from the common ills of mortality, from sickness, sorrow, and death? And under these visitations what will Mammon do for them? Will he visit the bed of sickness and smooth its pillow, and support the drooping spirit in the body's decay? Will he bind up the broken-hearted and pour the oil of comfort into the bosom of anguish? or

will he disarm death of his terrors and win for us a victory beyond the grave? Is he sufficient for these or any of these things? No! beyond doubt, he is not. None is but *one*, and He is the Master whom we are invited to serve! It is He who clothed the lilies of the field. It is He who feedeth the ravens; and from whom the lions do seek their food; whose mercy is over all his works; and who hath provided everything for the comfort and convenience of man. O let us flee to Him for succour! Let us freely receive the gracious offer which He makes to us for his dear Son's sake. And let us be thankful unto Him that He has not left us to the devices and desires of our own hearts, but that He has mercifully and wisely directed us to seek our happiness through Him, who knoweth better than we do ourselves what is for our good. If we will trust in Him, He will never leave nor forsake us. If we will "seek first" His "kingdom," and "His righteousness," He will freely give unto us all things—all things that are good for us here—all things that we can desire and hope for hereafter.

THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD LEADING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE.

BY

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2 ST. PETER III. 9.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to-usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

THE design of this second epistle of St. Peter, which, like the former one, was addressed “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” was to encourage them to adhere to the genuine faith and practice of the Gospel. It is supposed to have been written when the apostle foresaw the immediate prospect of his death, under the knowledge “that shortly he should put off his tabernacle;” and being under these impressions, St. Peter would naturally speak with greater fervour, and as it might seem, would more earnestly hope that his instructions would fall with greater weight, and after his decease be held in more affectionate remembrance.

In the first chapter he strengthens the Christian converts in the hope of receiving divine grace, and encourages them to use all diligence in becoming fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, reminding them that the honour and glory which the Saviour had received from GOD the Father, had been attested by a

voice from heaven when the apostles were with Him in the Holy Mount, as well as declared by the sure word of prophecy.

In the second chapter he predicts the rise of those false doctrines and heresies which, at so early a period, afflicted the peace of the Christian Church, denouncing bitter condemnation against all those presumptuous and self-willed persons who perverted the truth, but assuring those who were godly, that the LORD would deliver them out of their temptation, in the same manner as He had formerly saved Noah and Lot. And thus "stirring up their pure minds by way of remembrance," in this third chapter, he gives them the assurance that the object of both his epistles was to urge them to a solemn observance of the advice they had received, he represents to their minds the certainty of final judgment, reminds them of the doctrines previously preached to the same effect by St. Paul, and then beseeches them to grow in the heavenly grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. He assures them that the heavens and the earth, which were created by GOD, are, by the same divine agency, "kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men;" and that, although the time when this shall happen may appear, in their estimation, so remote as scarcely to be accomplishable, yet to GOD the interval is as nothing, seeing that in His sight "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." "The LORD," he adds, "is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness," that is, the promise of the LORD will be fulfilled in his own appointed time, according to the method, and at the precise period He has designed. Because it be not accomplished at the very moment men may expect it, they have not any sufficient grounds for

inferring that the divine purpose is changed, or that the promise to which they looked will be unperformed. The reason He delays this final visitation is by virtue of his long-suffering and forbearance, "not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Though God, argues St. Peter, defers his coming to judgment a thousand years or more, we must not consider this necessarily frustrates his intentions, or betokens a contradiction of his word, nor yet that its ultimate completion is tedious and uncertain, for in respect of Ilim who, as described by Isaiah, is the everlasting God, whose understanding cannot be searched, who fainteth not, nor is weary, "a thousand years are as one day." There is no discussion raised by St. Peter touching the relative measurement of time either with respect to the human or divine mode of computing it, but the question raised, concerns the truth of God's promises, and he declares that their execution is not to be examined by the opinions which men in their ideas commonly form of time. The LORD, says the apostle, is not slow, as some persons understand the word, but He is long-suffering, not forgetful and tardy, but abiding and patient; and if you think He ought to have brought all these things to pass sooner, to have dissolved the elements with fervent heat, and revealed in the open face of the world the deserts of those who have ever lived on its surface, be assured that this procrastination should be attributed to his merciful kindness and long-suffering; undoubtedly He will display all this terrific power at some time or another, "His day will come as a thief in the night," at a moment when men look not for it.

In this manner the apostle reasons with the Christian Churches to which he was writing, and we will now ex-

amine the character of those pledges he speaks of a little closer, and see how some of them had been made good on previous occasions, by which it will be more clearly perceived with what great reason he declared "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise."

In the exhortation addressed to the people by Joshua before his own death, he reminded them that all the good things had come to pass which God had promised them; that not even one thing had failed of all that he had spoken to them; and in like manner, as all his blessings had been manifested, so, with equal certainty, might they expect the fulfilment of all his threatenings and judgments, should they depart from his laws. He appealed to the completion of God's word with regard to all those blessings that the children of Israel had already received, by way of proving to them the danger of transgression, and the peril of serving the gods which the heathen had made; he shewed them the accomplishment of one, that they might, with a readier faith, avoid the penalties consequent upon the other. These promises were of an earthly and temporal nature, and if their actual enjoyment had not been fresh in their minds, Joshua would scarcely have ventured to refer to them, still less would he have appealed to them as memorable proofs, on the other hand, of the certainty of those evils which would befall them when they deserted their duties to JEHOVAH, and therefore, relying upon the mere recital of the ancient mercies of God to his people, as a testimony unanswerable, he left them to presuppose with what exact rigour and truth the guilt of their idolatrous defection would be punished*.

In the same manner, when Solomon offered his

* See Joshua, c. xxiv.

prayer at the dedication of the Temple, he could conceive nothing more suitable to that sacred feast than to recount before the assembled multitudes the promises of God; nothing seemed more natural than for him publicly "to bless God, who had given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that He had promised by the hand of Moses his servant." They understood and acknowledged the spirit of his prayer, and with devout conviction "all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the LORD."

What again could be a more visibly convincing and effectual accomplishment of God's promises than the revolt of the ten tribes of Israel from Rehoboam, after his father Solomon's death, as had been foretold by the prophet Ahijah? Jeroboam, who was a mighty man of valour, having clad himself with a new garment, the Shilonite "caught it and rent it in twelve pieces, and he said to Jeroboam, Take these ten pieces, for thus saith the LORD, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee*." And in accordance with this prophetic declaration, after the Jewish monarch's death, the kingdoms of Judah and Benjamin alone adhered stedfast to Rehoboam's son, and the other ten tribes revolted to the son of Nebat, thus originating that disunion and mutual jealousy which called into existence the divided monarchy of the two kingdoms; that portion which remained firmly attached to Rehoboam being designated the kingdom of Judah, whilst the transferred allegiance of the other constituted the kingdom of Israel.

Now the execution of this prophecy, which had been darkly hinted at by Solomon himself before his death†,

* 1 Kings xi. 31.

† Eccles. ii. 18, 19.

was a fact universally recognized by the Jewish nation at the time our Lord appeared on earth. Its completion moreover is frequently incidentally proved in the historical narrative of the New Testament. In those places for instance, where the conversation is detailed that our Lord held with the woman of Samaria, where she speaks of the hatred existing betwixt the rival tribes, and the superior sanctity of the temple on Mount Gerizim over that built at Jerusalem, or when CHRIST intimates his astonishment that of the ten lepers cleansed by Him, the only instance of gratitude should have been exhibited by a Samaritan.

Mark the fulfilment of another prediction which must have been fresh in their recollection. It had been foretold by Jeremiah* that the tribes of Judah should be carried away captive to Babylon and remain there for a period of seventy years. They anxiously and impatiently looked forward to its termination, but at length their desire of liberation ensnared them to doubt the probability that they should ever be restored to their native land, and they began to consult false prophets and dreamers of dreams under the hope that their term of bondage would be shortened. Jeremiah, however, made them clearly comprehend the duty of accommodating their wishes to the circumstances under which they were placed, and exhorted them to live under the faithful assurance that their captivity would not cease until the exact number of years had passed away. And by way of preventing their listening to any of the delusive suggestions by which their hopes were flattered and their confidence shaken, the prophet informed them of the disasters that would befall their brethren who were left

* Jeremiah xxiv.

behind at Jerusalem, and reserved for a much harder trial than themselves. This prophecy was delivered in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and the same year God put it into effect. Exactly seventy years later Cyrus issued his proclamation for the restoration of the Jews, and the rebuilding of the Temple. Although there were but few in comparison of this number who lived to return into their own country, yet the prediction was fulfilled, according to the common scriptural method, in their posterity. Here, again, may be seen an event so intimately bound up with the history of the Jewish nation, that its reality would be indelibly fixed on the national mind, and it exhibits a testimony to the truth of St. Peter's words, that the LORD was not slack concerning his promise, as these dejected captives regarded Him, but in his own appointed time, "He gathered them from the nations whither He had driven them."

Besides these direct testimonies which the Jews unconsciously bore to the truth of God's promises to their nation, there was yet another far more signal and important, and with the fulfilment of this, the hopes of the Gentile world were equally associated. "Behold," says Jeremiah, "the days come, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness*." Such was the promise: let us now observe the fulfilment. The former deliverances

* Jer. xxxiii. 1; xxii. 6.

of Israel were after the flesh; but they are now predicted to be after the spirit. The laws which CHRIST enacted are so holy, wise, and good, that, if duly observed, the effect of them must be such exact justice, such uninterrupted order and peace, such gentleness, and good-will, and universal charity, as would make even a heaven upon earth. By the personal union of the divine nature to the human, and by the merit which his sufferings thence derives, He expiated the sins of the whole world, and so became our righteousness. The kingdom of CHRIST is seldom mentioned, but righteousness is joined with it as its first fruits. It was the very kingdom He came to establish, and the promise of it that had been made at the fall was renewed through Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," a promise repeated to Isaac, and Nathan, and David.

These predictions, taking the earliest, were made some three or four thousand years before the Messiah actually appeared, yet we know the event happened exactly as the Spirit of God had foretold. We know, because the Scriptures have assured us of the fact, that "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was also able to perform." We are, as Isaac was, the children of promise; let us then place implicit belief in those promises through Him perfected; let us plead them, with David, saying, "LORD, Thou art God, and hast promised this goodness to thy servant: now, therefore, let it please Thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before Thee for ever: for Thou blessest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever."

St. Peter proceeds to explain the apparent inconsistency with which the ALMIGHTY's tardy accomplish-

ment of his designs was charged, by stating, that although the purposes of GOD were not carried out so soon as men expected them, yet the reason for this was to allow them further time for amendment of life. For assuredly, if the Divine will were to be executed suddenly and without warning, the end of men's lives would be marked by shame and sorrow. It is to prevent this melancholy state that the ALMIGHTY delays his judgment. Out of compassion and clemency He defers the day of retribution. A thoughtless, irreligious observer might say, that it marked a forfeiture of his holy word; but the delay of divine justice arises from its merciful disinclination to punish. The patience exemplified in those righteous servants, Abraham and Job, and the prophets and St. Paul, is but the visible characteristic of its heavenly author. And, therefore, if a person lives on from day to day, unbelieving and heedless of the consequences, and imagines that because no signal mark of divine displeasure has been visibly manifested, he may continue to live an evil life and act with impunity, he entirely mistakes the character of GOD, and attributes wrong motives to his gracious course of dealing,—for He only spares this sinner under the indulgent hope that he will return to a better habit of life, that he will repent, become converted from his errors, and, finally, saved through the merits of JESUS CHRIST.

This long-suffering and forbearance is one of those attributes only discernible in a state of perfection in the divine character: for, how much soever men may flatter themselves their nature is patient, and enduring, and unselfish, their best display of these graces is mixed up with interested motives, and they live under the expectation of reaping some worldly advantage from their self-denial. Far otherwise is the case with GOD: for his

forbearance and long-suffering is solely exercised for the benefit of his creatures, not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. In this character He proclaimed himself to Moses out of Mount Sinai, saying, "The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

The uses we should apply this kindness to are mentioned in the latter part of the text, which states that GOD thus manifests his forbearance that we should shew forth repentance. We, as his ministers, may be able to instruct and forewarn, and to declare the necessity that exists for improving the heart and the conduct; we may explain the words of Scripture so as to bring its truth clearly before the understanding, and to set forth to conviction its sufficiency as a rule of life: we may be the humble instruments of aiding you by our advice how to set about this work, but it is GOD alone who can commence it in your hearts. Repentance is the gift of GOD, but repentance is a gift He does not always vouchsafe to bestow. He denied it to Pharaoh; He withheld it from Saul. GOD gave it not to the Israelites who rebelled against Him, after He had delivered them from Egypt; nor yet to Judas, nor to that thief who died upon the cross in a state of hardness and impenitency. To give repentance is to give faith in Him who is its author; to believe in Him who can make it effectual. Coming through CHRIST, it works in the heart by the operation of the HOLY GHOST. True repentance is marked by contrition and penitence, and sorrow and shame: it is accompanied by a conviction of our utter worthlessness, and an humble confession of sin; and if its fruits are looked for, they will be seen in the increased holiness of life that is produced; in a more constant attendance at

the services of the Church ; in a more regular reception of the Lord's Supper ; in an uninterrupted course of daily prayer ; in greater strictness of thought and propriety of conduct ; whilst its influence may be acknowledged by possessing a mind more desirous of cultivating sacred and solemn thoughts ; in dwelling with tranquil delight on the goodness of God ; in feeling pained at the omission of any duty, however trifling, and in habitually turning with increased pleasure to whatever is capable of furnishing the soul with lofty, noble, and holy impressions. David was an example of true repentance, when he said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." May the same answer be returned to us that this repentant monarch received from the Prophet, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." Manasseh was an instance of true repentance ; when bound in fetters and carried away by the king of Assyria to Babylon, he humbled himself and besought God in his afflictions, and his prayer was heard. Job was an instance of true repentance, when amid all his troubles he cried out, "I abhor myself." The king of Nineveh was a true penitent when he fasted and covered himself with sackcloth. Peter was an instance of true repentance when, after denying his blessed Master, he wept tears of bitter sorrow : and so was the publican who smote on his breast, crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

From these examples may be perceived what are the real marks of that contrition which is pleasing in the sight of God. It is a state, as already shown, to which the promises of God are applicable. But all God's promises are fulfilled only in CHRIST and for his sake ; the claims, therefore, upon them must be pleaded through Him, and the nature of his mediatorial power will direct the faithful disciple with confidence to that source for salvation.

Abundant in grace, compassion and sympathy, He has both declared his willingness to save, and proclaimed it to be preached by his Gospel. When the leper came to CHRIST and desired to be made whole, he worshipped Him, crying out, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." When the centurion came to CHRIST, whilst he confessed his unworthiness, he also reposed faith in the Redeemer. The raising up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness was figurative of the same power. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners."

Let us not, however, close our meditation on this text without drawing from it a conclusion for ourselves,—nor suppose that we are interested in its truth no longer than we remain in this place; but let us strive to carry away its personal application to our retirement and privacy, and there holding commune with our own heart, let us inquire what there exists in it needing repentance, what requires changing in our habits and our thoughts. If we confess before God the error of our ways, and lament the weakness of our best exertions, He will pardon and assist us:—and let us do it at once, whilst we have the inclination and the power, whilst we are capable of exercising our sense of duty, and self-denial, whilst we may shew forth some evidence of faith, and, being repentant, share in the promise of his grace.

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